

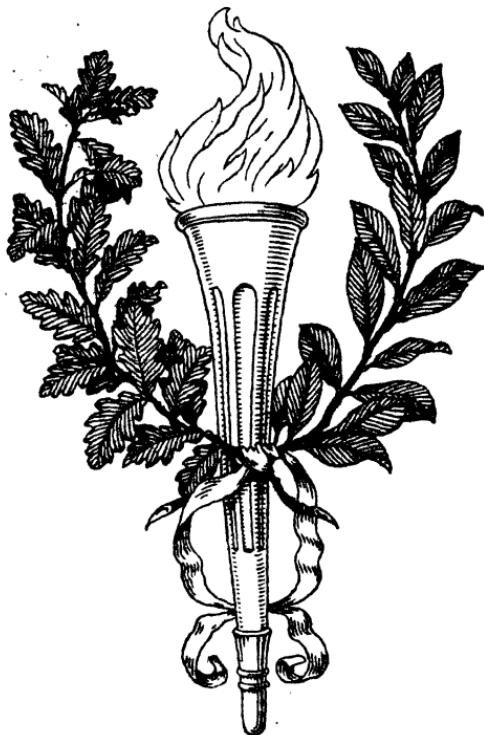
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**ZADIG
AND OTHER ROMANCES**



ZADIG AND OTHER
ROMANCES BY VOLTAIRE

TRANSLATED BY H. I. WOOLF AND WILFRID
S. JACKSON, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND
NOTES BY H. I. WOOLF. ILLUSTRATED BY
HENRY KEEN :: :: :: ::



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

MR. H. I. WOOLF's translations of the stories *Zadig*, *Story of a Good Brahmin*, *The Simple Soul* and *The Princess of Babylon*, together with his Introduction and Notes, appear in this volume by permission of the publishers, Messrs. George Routledge & Sons, Ltd. *The White Bull* has been specially translated for this edition by Mr. Wilfrid S. Jackson.

The figures in brackets in the text refer to the notes, which will be found at the end of the volume.



TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

“**J**’AI fait un peu de bien, c’est mon meilleur ouvrage.” It is with this quotation from Voltaire that Condorcet closes his life of the old invalid of Ferney” . . . un peu de bien. . . . If all that Voltaire did was only a little, the much that other individuals have done is infinitesimal.

His activities were multitudinous. For more than sixty years plays, poems, history, philosophy, political studies, physics, metaphysics, novels, literary criticism, rolled from his pen, and in addition he occupied his leisure with a vast correspondence filling over seventeen fat volumes.

The great lesson he sought to teach was that of tolerance, of tolerance again, and always of tolerance.

With the idea of making France and the world more fit for men to inhabit, he set to driving his sharp pen into the vitals of every intolerance, of every bigotry, of every tyranny he could find. He had not far to seek. Around him he saw men harried by the self-styled representatives of God, and harassed by the custodians of law and order, themselves largely the allies of the clerics. At one moment he was waging war against the Jesuits, at another against the Jansenists, against the cruelties of the farmers-general, against the powers of a court

that was unable, or afraid, to see the evil influences it itself tolerated, supported even.

Voltaire's life was one long fight, therefore, and he considered his pen far more a useful tool wherewith to carve channels through which his creed of tolerance might flow, a weapon with which to kill the devils of bigotry and injustice, than as an instrument for making things to delight the world and enhance his own renown. To him Fame was always less important than Right. Personal celebrity had its advantage in that it put him financially in such a position that he could, and did, give to all those in need, but for himself (he had an independent income) he cared not a jot for the immense publicity he enjoyed. The happiest moment of his life, doubtless, was when on his return to Paris in 1778, an old man of eighty-four, the crowd surged round him and one woman, being asked by a stranger who the old man was, replied : "Don't you know that's the man who saved the Calas ?" Calas had been tortured on the wheel on the charge of murdering his son to prevent the boy becoming a Catholic. Voltaire had his innocence established, and the dead man's family compensated.

So much for the practical help he gave to all sufferers from injustice and bigotry. He cared little whether the sufferer was a Jesuit or a Jansenist or neither : so long as he was a victim, Voltaire exerted every effort to have the wrong righted.

His pen, naturally, was his chief weapon, and with his pen he sought not merely to redress a given wrong, but also to exterminate the cause of the wrong. One of his great generalisations with this object was that "whenever one can say of any state of life that if everyone embraced it the human race would be lost, it is demonstrated that that state is worthless, and that he who embraces it does harm to the human race as long as he is in it." Applied to monasticism the argument is irresistible ; applied to armies equally, although in *The*

Man with Forty Crowns Voltaire wished to show that military training confers some benefit on the individual soldier.

In his youth Voltaire was placed in a Jesuit college where the children of the nobility—with the exception of the children of Jansenists—were educated. The seed that later budded into his attacks on the Jesuits, and blossomed into their banishment, doubtless was sown there. Hypocrisy and intolerance reigned at the court of Louis XIV, and much more effort was made to exterminate Jansenism than to lighten the burdens of the people. Voltaire was taken into the best society, and with a poet's quick eye—he was already writing verse—saw for himself the fundamental shallowness of “*la bonne compagnie*.”

His father, who was a government official, was distressed beyond measure that his son should be writing poetry. He hoped to place him in the magistrature, and to cure him of his talent sent him to live at the house of the French ambassador in Holland. But this achieved nothing, and after an amorous adventure Voltaire returned to Paris, determined to write poetry, for which crime his father banished him from the paternal roof. Voltaire must have well remembered his own experience with family opposition when he wrote in his *Life of Molière*: “It has been remarked that nearly all those who have made for themselves a name in the arts have cultivated them in spite of their parents, and that in them nature has always been stronger than education.”

Louis XIV had just died. The populace, whose idol he had so long been, mocked his memory. Satires at his expense were published broadcast. Voltaire was accused of having written one of them, the last line of which was: “I have seen these evils, and I am not twenty.” He was just over twenty-two, and the police were content to regard the similarity of ages as a sufficient

reason for shutting him up in the Bastille. Voltaire had first-hand experience of the tyranny against which his pen fought so mightily.

One might continue for page after page the history of the persecutions, troubles and general harryings he had to endure all his life. Their recapitulation here would serve no purpose. It is enough to indicate that he attacked abuses from which he had suffered, that were not the mere fancies of a journalist seeking sensational copy.

It may be surmised that all the incidents in his tales have a basis of fact, and in particular the incidents illustrating persecution. This Voltaire himself indicates in the Epistle Dedicatory of *Zadig*, where Sadi writes that this is a work that "says more than it seems to say." It is confirmed further by Frederick the Great, who in his Eulogy of Voltaire says that Voltaire's novels are "works which, seeming to express frivolity, contain moral allegories or criticisms of some modern systems." It is highly probable that most of Voltaire's characters are thinly disguised portraits of his contemporaries, friends and enemies. Yébor, in *Zadig*, has long been identified with Boyer, the theatine, and Mr. William Raleigh Price has investigated the identity of many others in his book *The Symbolism of Voltaire*, which clearly epitomises Voltaire's aims in *Zadig*. *Zadig* is Voltaire, and all that happens to *Zadig* in the Orient had happened to Voltaire in the Occident. But disguised : it was hardly safe in priest-ridden France to express openly an anti-clerical opinion : but though the front-door of the house is bolted and barred, a window often is left open or unshuttered. *Zadig* is a window through which those who had eyes to see might observe contemporary ignorance and infamy.

And this is true of all Voltaire's novels. Whenever he seems to be laughing most, then is he most serious, in the most deadly earnest. Voltaire's laughter was

barbed ; it never shot out from his mind without striking to kill. In his time (as perhaps in all times) it was dangerous to tell the truth, for men live by lies. But what a happy thought it was to force men to read the truth for their own amusement, without a suspicion at first that they were reading their own indictment, carried on from page to page by pure enjoyment of Voltaire's frolicking, until when the last page was read something of the author's profound meaning started to glimmer in the reader's mind, to illumine his soul. "Few books of philosophy are more useful than the philosophical novel," says Condorcet. "They are read by frivolous men, to whom the mere name of philosophy is repugnant."

The characters in Voltaire's novels resemble each other strangely. Are not Zadig, the Simple Soul and Amazan the same person ? All three are young, of independent means, possessors of very just minds and a mania for acquiring knowledge ; all three suffer thereby. Further, all three have to travel far from their native lands to attain their respective goals. Are not these attributes Voltaire's attributes ? Did not Voltaire suffer just as his heroes suffer, and was not he too an exile as they were ? It is safe to say that Voltaire's heroes are Voltaire himself.

The women in Voltaire's stories are equally alike. Astarte, Formosante, Saint Yves are all implicated with some man other than the hero of the story, and none of them is described physically with any definiteness. Astarte's features are unknown, indeed, to anyone but Zadig and Moabdār. Who was this woman whom Voltaire always depicted as beautiful without detailing her beauty ? Was it some living woman whom he immortalised in each of his tales ? Or was it not rather Voltaire's muse, to whom he makes such strong personal appeal at the end of *The Princess of Babylon* ? The circumstances of Voltaire's career suggest that he was

always being hindered by the superficial ignorance of his enemies from enjoying the Muse he loved.

Apart from the general application of Voltaire's novels to contemporary events, each of them has a moral thesis. *Zadig* places the supreme direction of mankind in a Providence that eliminates chance from the universe. "Everything is trial, or punishment, or reward, or prevision." Man is but a cog in a machine, blindly engaging with other cogs to complete the incompletable cycle of eternity. There is no evil from which good does not spring.

The Simple Soul proves that through misfortune the soul of man develops, that the reward of spiritual development lies in itself and not in the attainment of one's apparent goal.

The theme of *The Princess of Babylon* is, once again, that man is infinitely little. The phoenix, which has lived twenty-eight thousand years, dare not express an opinion on the origins of man, while the mere mortals extract theories from the infinitesimal experience of their threescore years and ten. In this story, however, the moral thesis is not so evident as in the others.

The Story of a Good Brahmin, which contains the greatest truth in the fewest words, shows that felicity is not everything in this world, that to be happy men must sacrifice intelligence, that it is a hard sacrifice, but that happiness divorced from reason would be more intolerable than reason divorced from itself.

Voltaire's novels and dialogues are a school for writers of all ages and nations. Never was style more wedded to matter. Never was matter less sacrificed to style. Never did a man have so much to say, and never did he say it more concisely and with greater sparkle. Modern journalism is his great debtor in many ways, and had modern journalists but a tithe of his courage on the one hand, and of his power of thought and expression on the other, modern journals would be worthy monu-

ments to contemporary life instead of unworthy headstones in the graveyard of public stupidities.

In spite of this strict adherence to fundamentals, this almost uncanny power of stripping ideas to the bone, Voltaire was a poet, a great poet, although, maybe, his fame as such rests on one lyric, always worthy of reproduction, and always reproduced, the Stanzas to Mme Du Chatelet. One of its stanzas alone makes its merit immortal :

“On meurt deux fois, je le vois bien :
Cesser d'aimer et d'être aimable,
C'est une mort insupportable ;
Cesser de vivre, ce n'est rien.”

And yet the power in some of his other lyrics is undeniable. In an impromptu written by him at supper at one of the German courts occur these two verses :

“Il faut penser, sans quoi l'homme devient,
Malgré son âme, un vrai cheval de somme.
Il faut aimer, c'est ce qui nous soutient ;
Sans rien aimer, il est triste d'être homme.

“Il faut, la nuit, dire tout ce qu'on sent
Au tendre objet que votre cœur adore ;
Se réveiller pour en redire autant,
Se rendormir pour y songer encore.”

One wonders if this last *douceur* was not written by Alfred de Musset or by Victor Hugo, nearly a century later. It is a prelude to the work of the Romanticists.

The quatrains beginning with “Tout annonce d'un Dieu l'éternelle existence,” with their rule of life for father, child and man, fulfil Voltaire's own definition of true poetry, that it shall be “natural and harmonious, and speak to the heart as much as to the mind.” Naturally, his poetry is primarily the poetry of Reason, because he was the great apostle of Reason. It is, if one may so express it, perfect prose crystallised in rhyme.

A word here about Voltaire's religion is appropriate. Many people have been frightened away from reading any of his works because they have heard that he was an atheist, that he was an enemy of the Church. He was not an atheist. There is and never has been the slightest justification for such an idea. If anyone had asked what his religion was, he would have certainly replied, as the Simple Soul replied : "I have my religion, just as you have yours." That is a very long way from atheism, and is the position to-day of thousands of persons. A man should not wear his religion on his sleeve any more than he should wear his heart. There is no question but that Voltaire was one of the most deeply religious men who have ever lived. His whole life spent in trying to help the suffering, his vast writings almost all designed to remove the cause of suffering, prove it abundantly.

That he was an enemy of the Church there is no doubt whatsoever. He objected, as many reasoning people object, to the assumption that any *man* has the right to say : "God speaks through me and me only. I alone am His chosen mouthpiece. Put your trust in me, and I will see that the Creator makes your garden fertile." He saw that the followers of Christ denied their whole religion by their actions, that with words of love on their lips they passed their days with evil in their hearts : he saw that the Christian doctrine, with its complicated and ever-contradictory theology, had involved humanity in the most terrible suffering : he saw that organised religion was, like any other organisation, beneficial to the few but monstrously tyrannical to the many : and as the enemy of all tyrants, individual and collective, he struck. It is to him chiefly that humanity to-day owes its almost complete immunity from clerical domination, and what clerical domination means we may learn from our own small experience of the bishops of the Church of England. Has any reform

ever been approved or aided by them? Are they not rather the brakes on progress, on the emancipation, spiritual and material, of the sons of God?

We have tried to present here, very briefly, the main influence moulding Voltaire's life and work; but he was such a great man, such a tremendous force for Good, such a mighty fighter for Right, and such a hater of oppression, that one might write of him as many books as here are pages. What he once said of Love might be said of him :

“Qui que tu sois, voici ton maître,
Il l'est, le fut, ou doit l'être.”

H. I. WOOLF

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE ON “THE WHITE BULL”

“It was a happy thought,” says Mr. Woolf, “to make men read truth for their own amusement,” and *The White Bull* was one of Voltaire's happiest thoughts. It is an outburst of high spirits and joyous malice, in which the utmost extravagance of fiction lies so near the recorded historical facts of Bible narrative that the fiction seems no more than the wrong side of the tapestry. If humour be born of the incongruous, it never came to better birth than when Nebuchadnezzar was made a handsome prince of a fairy-tale and, wedded to a lovely Princess, saw his enemy, the prophet Daniel, walk in his bridal procession transmogrified, in turn, into a magpie. And the sacred onions, “which were not exactly gods, but which were uncommonly like them,” take on a new and deserved divinity, and become immortal gods of laughter. A new and earnest generation is upon us to which the term “Voltairean” is a reproach. No doubt it has its own ways of combating *l'infâme*, but laughter is not one of them. So let us be glad of Voltaire.

WILFRID S. JACKSON



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**ZADIG
AND OTHER ROMANCES**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF ZADIG

I, THE undersigned, who pass for a scholar, and even for a man of wit, have read this manuscript, which I have found in spite of myself curious, droll, moral, philosophic and worthy of pleasing even those who hate novels. I have therefore disparaged it and have assured the cahdi-lesker (1) it is a detestable work.

* * * * *





EPISTLE DEDICATORY
OF
ZADIG TO THE SULTANA SHERAA
By SADI

The 18th of the month of Schewal, 837th year of the Hegira

ZYES' enchantment, heart's torment, mind's light, I do not kiss the dust at your feet because you rarely walk, or if you do, it is upon carpets from Iran or upon rose-leaves.

I offer you the translation of a book by a philosopher of bygone times who, being in the happy position of having nothing to do, set about amusing himself by writing the story of Zadig, a work which says more than it seems to say.

I beg you to read it and judge it, for although you are in the springtime of life, although all pleasures seek you, although you are beautiful and have gifts (3) in addition to your beauty, although people praise you from eve to dawn, and that for all these reasons it is right you should have no common sense ; yet you have a very wise wit and a very fine taste, and I have heard you reason better than many old dervishes with long beards and conical hats. You are prudent without being distrustful, and gentle without being weak ; your beneficence is guided by discretion ; you love your

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friends, and make no enemies. Your wit never borrows its charms from scandal ; you neither speak nor do evil, despite the prodigious ease with which you might do so. Finally, it has always seemed to me that your soul is as pure as your beauty. You have even a small fund of philosophy which has made me think that you more than another woman will enjoy this philosopher's work.

The story was written originally in old Chaldean, which neither you nor I understand. It was translated into Arabic to amuse the famous sultan Oulougbeb. This was at the time when the Arabs and the Persians started writing stories like the Thousand and One Nights, the Thousand and One Days, etc. Ouloug preferred reading Zadig, but his wives preferred the Thousand and One.

“ How,” asked wise Ouloug, “ can you prefer senseless stories that mean nothing ? ”

“ That is just why we like them,” the ladies answered.

I flatter myself you do not resemble them, and that you will be a real Ouloug. I hope even, that when you are tired of ordinary talk, which is much like the Thousand and One save that it is less amusing, I may find a minute to have the honour of talking sense to you. If you had been Thalestris in the reign of Scander, son of Philip ; if you had been the Queen of Sheba in the reign of Solomon, it would have been these kings who would have made the journey.

I pray the celestial powers that your pleasures be unalloyed, that your beauty endure, and that your happiness be without end.

SADI





ZADIG OR DESTINY

CHAPTER I

THE ONE-EYED MAN

IN the reign of King Moabdar there lived in Babylon a young man named Zadig, of naturally charming disposition reinforced by education. Although young and rich, he knew how to control his passions, was unaffected, did not want always to be in the right, and was considerate to human frailty. People were astonished to observe that despite his good wits he never perverted by derision the loose, scrappy, noisy tittle-tattle, the reckless backbiting, the ignorant conclusions, the coarse quips, the empty tumult of words, which in Babylon were called "conversation." He had learned in the first book of Zarathustra that self-esteem is a balloon swollen with wind, whence tempests issue when it is pricked. Above all, Zadig did not boast of his scorn for and power over women. He was generous and, in accordance with Zarathustra's great precept—"When thou dost eat, give to eat to the dogs, even though they bite thee"—he did not fear to oblige ingrates. He was as wise as a man can be, for he sought to live with the wise.

Although learned in ancient Chaldean science, he was not ignorant of such physical laws of nature as were then known, and knew of metaphysics what has been

known in all ages, that is to say, precious little. Despite the new philosophy of his time, he was strongly persuaded there were three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter days in the year, and that the sun was the centre of the world, and when the chief Magi told him with insolent arrogance that he had a sinful heart, that to believe the sun revolved on its own axis and the year had twelve months was to be an enemy of the state, he kept silence without anger or contempt.

With his great wealth (and consequently many friends), his health and pleasant face, his just and modest mind, his sincere and magnanimous nature, Zadig thought he could be happy. He was to be married to Sémire, whose birth, beauty and fortune made her the most desirable match in Babylon. For Sémire he had a deep and virtuous attachment, and she loved him passionately. They were nearing the happy moment of their union when, as they walked together towards one of the gates of the city, beneath the palm-trees which adorn the banks of the Euphrates, they saw approaching them some men armed with sabres and spears. They were retainers of young Orcan, nephew of one of the ministers, who had been led by his uncle's courtiers to believe he could do anything he pleased. He had none of Zadig's graces or charms, but as he thought himself a far finer fellow, he was annoyed at not being deemed more desirable. This jealousy, which was the result solely of his vanity, made Orcan think he was madly in love with Sémire. His kidnappers seized her and in an outburst of violence wounded her and shed the blood of a person the sight of whom would have melted the hearts of the tigers on Mount Imaus. She pierced the sky with her screams. "Husband! dear husband!" she cried. "They are tearing me from him I adore!" She was not at all troubled by her danger. She thought only of her dear Zadig, who was defending her with all the strength that love and courage give. With only two

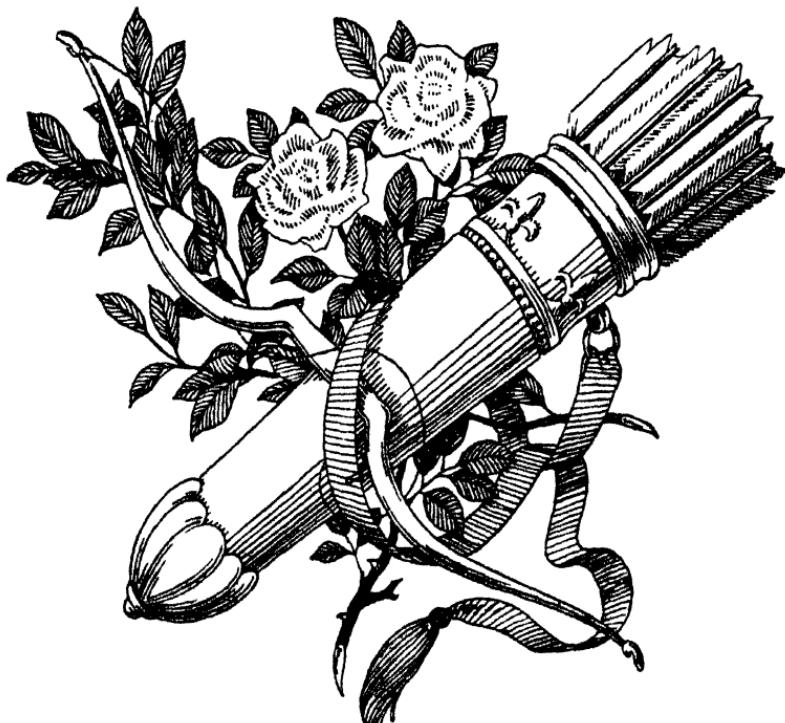
slaves to help him he routed the kidnappers, and carried Sémiré home. She had swooned and was bleeding. On opening her eyes she saw her deliverer. “O Zadig!” she whispered. “I loved you before as my husband; I love you now as the man to whom I owe life and honour!” Never was heart more thrilled than Sémiré’s; never did a lovelier mouth express more affectionate feelings in words of fire inspired by the sense of the greatest service and the warmest raptures of genuine love.

Her wounds were slight, and she was soon well again. Zadig’s hurt was more dangerous. A spear had hit him near the eye and made a deep wound. Sémiré asked nothing of the gods save that her lover should get well. Night and day her eyes were bathed in tears. She lived for the moment when Zadig should be able to delight in her tender looks once more. But an abscess formed on the wounded eye, and made the worst to be feared. The great doctor Hermes was sent for from Memphis, and he came to Babylon with a numerous retinue. He visited the sick man and said he would lose his eye. He even predicted the day and hour when this disastrous accident would happen. “If it had been the right eye,” he said, “I should have cured it, but wounds in the left eye are incurable.”

All Babylon, while bemoaning Zadig’s fate, marvelled at Hermes’ profound knowledge. Two days later the abscess burst of its own accord, and Zadig was completely cured. Hermes wrote a book in which he proved that Zadig should not have been cured. Zadig did not read the book. As soon as he could go out, he prepared to visit her who was the hope of his happiness in life. Sémiré was in the country, where she had been for three days past. On his way there, Zadig learned that this beautiful lady had announced her unconquerable aversion to one-eyed men, and had married Orcan that very night. At this news he fainted. His misery brought him to the edge of the grave, and he was ill for a very long time.

But reason prevailed at last over his affliction, and the atrocity of what had happened served even to console him.

“ Since I have suffered such a cruel caprice,” he said, “ on the part of a girl brought up at court, I shall have to marry a daughter of the people.” He chose Azora, the wisest and best-born girl in the city. He married her, and for a month lived in the bliss of the most affectionate union. Only, he noticed in his wife a certain frivolity of temperament and much inclination to think that the best-built young men had necessarily the most virtue and wit.





CHAPTER II

THE NOSE



ONE day Azora came back from a walk very angry and expostulating loudly.

“ What is the matter, dear wife ? ” asked Zadig. “ Who has put you out ? ”

“ Alas ! ” replied Azora. “ You would be as indignant as I am if you had seen what I have seen. I have been to console Cosrou, the young widow. She erected a tomb to her young husband two days ago near the stream which borders this plain. In her anguish she promised the gods to stay by the tomb so long as the stream should flow close to it.”

“ Well,” said Zadig, “ she is an estimable woman, who really loved her husband.”

“ Ah ! ” continued Azora, “ if only you knew what she was doing when I called on her ! ”

“ What was she doing, beautiful Azora ? ”

“ She was changing the course of the stream.”

Azora indulged in such lengthy protestations, burst into such fierce reproach of the young widow, that Zadig found her display of virtue offensive.

He had a friend named Cador, one of the young men his wife thought better and more honest than the rest. He took him into his confidence, and by making him a present of considerable value assured himself, so far as was possible, of his loyalty. Azora had passed two days

at the house of one of her friends in the country, and returned home on the third day. The servants in tears announced that her husband had died suddenly that very night, that they had not dared bring her such disastrous news, and that they had just buried him at the end of the garden in the tomb of his fathers.

Azora wept, tore her hair, and swore to kill herself. That night Cador asked permission to speak with her, and they wept together. The next day they wept less and dined together. Cador confided that his friend had left him the greater part of his wealth, and let Azora understand that his happiness would be to share his fortune with her. The lady wept, grew angry, calmed down. The supper was longer than the dinner. They talked to each other with more confidence. Azora sang the praises of the dead man, but admitted he had faults from which Cador was free.

In the middle of the meal Cador complained of a violent pain in his spleen. The lady, anxious and assiduous, sent for all the essences with which she perfumed herself to see if perchance there was one that was good for a pain in the spleen. She was very sorry the great Hermes was no longer in Babylon, and even condescended to touch the place where Cador felt such sharp twinges. "Are you subject to this cruel malady?" she asked tenderly.

"Sometimes I nearly die of it," answered Cador, "and the only thing that relieves me is to apply to the spot the nose of a man twenty-four hours dead."

"What a strange remedy!" said Azora.

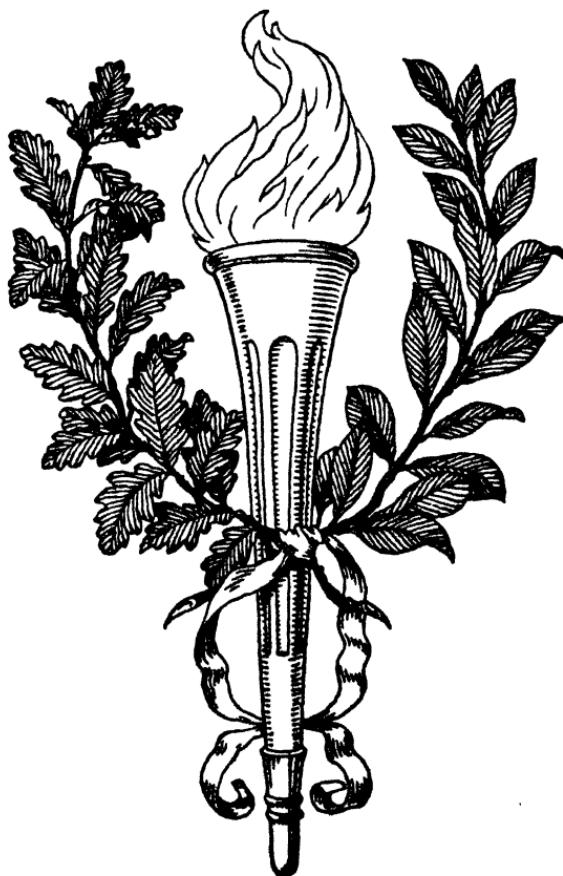
"Not stranger than Mr. Arnoult's (4) sachets for apoplexy," replied Cador.

This answer, coupled with the young man's extreme merit, decided the lady. "After all," she said, "when my husband goes over the bridge Tchinavar from the world of yesterday into the world of to-morrow, will the angel Israel let him pass any the less because his nose

will be a little shorter in the second life than it was in the first?"

She took a razor, therefore, went to her husband's tomb, watered it with her tears, and advanced to cut off the nose of Zadig, whom she found stretched out in the grave. Zadig got up, holding his nose with one hand, and stopping the razor with the other.

"Madam," he said, "do not cry out any more against young Cosrou. The project of cutting off my nose is quite as good as that of changing the course of a stream."





CHAPTER III

THE DOG AND THE HORSE



ADIG found that the first moon of marriage, even as it is written in the book of Zend, is of honey, and the second of wormwood. After a time he had to get rid of Azora, who had become too difficult to live with, and he tried to find his happiness in the study of nature. "No one is happier," said he, "than a philosopher who reads in this great book that God has placed before our eyes. The truths he discovers belong to him. He nourishes and ennobles his soul. He lives in peace, fearing nothing from men, and his dear wife does not come to cut off his nose."

Filled with these ideas, he retired to a house in the country on the banks of the Euphrates. There he did not pass his time calculating how many inches of water flow in one second under the arches of a bridge, or if a cubic line more rain fell in the month of the mouse than in the month of the sheep. He did not contrive to make silk from spiders' webs, or porcelain from broken bottles (5); but he studied above all the characteristics of animals and plants, and soon acquired a perspicacity which showed him a thousand differences where other men see only uniformity.

While walking one day near a little wood he saw one of the queen's eunuchs hastening towards him, followed by several officers, who seemed to be greatly

troubled, and ran hither and thither like distracted men seeking something very precious they have lost.

“ Young man,” cried the Chief Eunuch, “ you haven’t seen the queen’s dog, have you ? ”

“ It’s not a dog,” answered Zadig modestly, “ it’s a bitch.”

“ That’s so,” said the Chief Eunuch.

“ It’s a very small spaniel,” added Zadig, “ which has had puppies recently ; her left forefoot is lame, and she has very long ears.”

“ You have seen her then ? ” said the Eunuch, quite out of breath.

“ Oh, no ! ” answered Zadig. “ I have not seen the animal, and I never knew the queen had a bitch.”

Just at this moment, by one of the usual freaks of fortune, the finest horse in the king’s stables escaped from a groom’s hands and fled into the plains of Babylon. The Master of the King’s Hounds and all the other officials rushed after it with as much anxiety as the Chief Eunuch after the bitch. The Master of the King’s Hounds came up to Zadig and asked if he had not seen the king’s horse pass by.

“ The horse you are looking for is the best galloper in the stable,” answered Zadig. “ It is fifteen hands high, and has a very small hoof. Its tail is three and a half feet long. The studs on its bit are of twenty-three carat gold, and its shoes of eleven scruples of silver.”

“ Which road did it take ? ” asked the Master of the King’s Hounds. “ Where is it ? ”

“ I have not seen the horse,” answered Zadig, “ and I have never heard speak of it.”

The Master of the King’s Hounds and the Chief Eunuch had no doubt but that Zadig had stolen the king’s horse and the queen’s bitch, and they had him taken before the Grand Destur, who condemned him to the knout and afterwards to spend the rest of his days in Siberia. Hardly had judgment been pronounced

than the horse and the bitch were found. The judges were in the sad necessity of having to rescind their judgment, but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having denied seeing what he had seen. Only after the fine had been paid was Zadig allowed to plead his cause, which he did in the following terms.

“ Stars of Justice,” he said, “ Unfathomable Wells of Knowledge, Mirrors of Truth, that have the solidity of lead, the hardness of iron, the radiance of the diamond, and much affinity with gold, since I am permitted to speak before this august assembly, I swear to you by Ormuzd that I have never seen the queen’s honourable bitch or the king of kings’ sacred horse. Let me tell you what happened.

“ I was walking toward the little wood where I met later the venerable Chief Eunuch and the very illustrious Master of the King’s Hounds. I saw an animal’s tracks on the sand and I judged without difficulty they were the tracks of a small dog. The long, shallow furrows printed on the little ridges of sand between the tracks of the paws informed me that the animal was a bitch with pendent dugs, who hence had had puppies recently. Other tracks in a different direction, which seemed all the time to have scraped the surface of the sand beside the fore-paws, gave me the idea that the bitch had very long ears ; and as I remarked that the sand was always less hollowed by one paw than by the three others, I concluded that our august queen’s bitch was somewhat lame, if I dare say so.

“ As regards the king of kings’ horse, you may know that as I walked along the road in this wood I saw the marks of horse-shoes, all equal distances apart. That horse, said I, gallops perfectly. The dust on the trees in this narrow road only seven feet wide was raised a little right and left three and a half feet from the middle of the road. This horse, said I, has a tail three and a

half feet long, and its movement right and left has swept up this dust. I saw beneath the trees, which made a cradle five feet high, some leaves newly fallen from the branches, and I recognised that this horse had touched there and was hence fifteen hands high. As regards his bit, it must be of twenty-three carat gold, for he rubbed the studs against a stone which I knew to be a touchstone and tested. From the marks his hoofs made on certain pebbles I knew the horse was shod with eleven scruple silver."

All the judges admired Zadig's profound and subtle perspicacity, news of which came to the ears of the king and queen. In the ante-rooms, the throne-room, and the closet Zadig was the sole topic of conversation, and although several of the Magi thought he should be burned as a sorcerer, the king ordered the fine of four hundred ounces of gold to which he had been condemned to be returned to him. The clerk of the court, the ushers, the attorneys called on him with great pomp to bring him these four hundred ounces. They retained only three hundred and ninety-eight for judicial costs, and their lackeys demanded largess.

Zadig saw how dangerous it was sometimes to be too knowing, and promised himself, on the first occasion that offered, not to say what he had seen.

The occasion soon presented itself. A state prisoner escaped, and passed beneath the window of Zadig's house. Zadig was questioned, and made no reply. But it was proved he had looked out of the window. For this crime he was condemned to five hundred ounces of gold, and, as is the custom in Babylon, he thanked his judges for their indulgence.

"Good God!" he said to himself. "A man who walks in a wood where the queen's bitch or the king's horse has passed is to be pitied! How dangerous it is to look out of the window! How difficult it is to be happy in this life!"



CHAPTER IV

THE ENVIOUS MAN



ZADIG resolved to find in philosophy and friendship consolation for the tricks fortune had played him. In a suburb of Babylon he had an elegantly decorated house where he brought together all the arts and pleasures worthy of an honest man. In the morning his library was open to all night his table was free to all good fellows. But he soon learned how dangerous scholars are. A great dispute started over one of the laws of Zarathustra, which forbade eating the griffon. "How can the griffon be forbidden," asked some, "if this animal does not exist?"

"The griffon must exist," said others, "seeing that Zarathustra does not wish it to be eaten."

Zadig tried to bring the disputants into harmony. "If there are griffons," he said, "do not let us eat them: if there are no griffons, we shall eat still less: anyway we shall all be obeying Zarathustra."

A scholar who had written thirteen books on the characteristics of the griffon, and was, moreover, a great theurgist, hastened to accuse Zadig before an Archmagus named Yébor, the most stupid of the Chaldeans and, consequently, the most fanatic. This man would have had Zadig impaled for the greater glory of the sun, and for this same glory would have recited Zarathustra's



A great Dispute started

breviary in an even more satisfied voice than usual. Friend Cador (one friend is worth more than a hundred priests) went to see the aged Yébor (6). “Long live the sun and the griffons!” he cried. “And take good care not to punish Zadig! He is a saint: he has some griffons in his poultry-yard, and he does not eat them at all. His accuser is a heretic who dares assert that although rabbits are cloven-footed they are in no way unclean.”

“Well,” mumbled Yébor, wagging his bald head, “Zadig must be impaled for thinking wickedly about the griffons, and the other for speaking wickedly about the rabbits.”

Cador composed the matter through the agency of a maid of honour whom he had provided with a baby, and who had much influence in the sacred college. No one was impaled, and this made several of the doctors murmur and predict that the omission presaged the fall of Babylon.

“Where, oh! where, is happiness?” cried Zadig. “I am persecuted by everything in the world, and even by things which are not!” He cursed the scholars, and wished thenceforward to live only with good fellows.

He brought together in his house the most honourable men and the most amiable women in Babylon. He gave dainty suppers, preceded often by concerts, and enlivened by charming conversation whence he managed to banish the desire to show off one’s own wit—which is the surest way both of having none and of spoiling the most brilliant party. Vanity influenced the choice of neither his friends nor his viands, for he preferred in everything to *be* rather than to *appear*: this habit of mind made him genuinely esteemed, although he did not lay claim to any special appreciation.

Opposite Zadig’s house lived Arimaze, a person whose mean soul was depicted on his coarse face. He was corroded with gall and swollen with conceit, and to cap

these qualities he had a tedious wit. He slandered the world in revenge for his complete lack of success in it. Although he was rich, he had great difficulty in getting sycophants to come to his house. The carriages which entered Zadig's courtyard each evening annoyed him ; the noise of Zadig's renown irritated him still more. Occasionally he went to Zadig's and sat himself at table without being asked. There, he spoiled the company's pleasure, just as harpies are said to defile the meats they touch. When one day he wished to give a party in honour of a lady, she refused his invitation and went to sup with Zadig. On another occasion, while he was talking with Zadig in the palace, they came up with one of the ministers, who invited Zadig to supper and did not invite Arimaze. The most implacable hatreds often have no more important cause. This man, whom everyone in Babylon called "Arimaze The Envious," wished to get rid of Zadig because the latter was always called "Zadig The Happy." As Zarathustra says—The opportunity of doing harm presents itself a hundred times a day, and that of doing good once a year.

The Envious went to Zadig's house and found him walking in his gardens with two friends and a lady to whom he often paid compliments without other intention than to be pleasant. The conversation turned to a war which the king had just concluded successfully against his vassal, the King of Hircania. Zadig, who in this short war had shown his courage, praised the king greatly and the lady still more. He took his tablets and wrote four verses, which he composed on the spot, and gave to this beautiful person to read. His friends begged him to let them hear the verses. Modesty or, rather, a quite understandable vanity, stopped him. He knew that impromptu verses never seem good save to her in whose honour they are composed. He broke in half the tablet on which he had just written, and threw the two pieces into a rose-bush, where his friends looked

for them in vain. It started to rain a little, and they returned to the house. The Envious stayed in the garden and searched so hard that he found a piece of the tablet. It was broken in such a way that each half of a verse which filled a line made sense and even a verse of shorter measure ; but by a still stranger chance these little verses made a sense which contained the most horrible insults against the king. This is what they said :—

“ Through prodigies of vice
Established on his throne,
Amidst the public peace
He is the foe alone.”

For the first time in his life The Envious was happy. He held in his hand the means of getting rid of a good and charming man. Filled with this cruel joy, he arranged for this satire in Zadig's writing to reach the king himself. Zadig was thrown into prison with his two friends and the lady. His trial was soon over without the judges condescending to hear him. When he came up for sentence, The Envious waylaid him and told him at the top of his voice that the verses were worthless. Zadig did not plume himself on being a good poet, but he was in despair at being condemned as guilty of *lèse-majesté*, and at seeing a beautiful woman and two friends kept in gaol for a crime they had not committed. He was not allowed to speak because his tablets spoke for him. Such was the law of Babylon. He was made to pass to punishment before a curious crowd of which no member dared sympathise with him, but of which all rushed to look at him to see if he would die with a good grace. Only his relations were distressed, for they inherited nothing. Three quarters of his fortune were confiscated for the king, and the remaining quarter for The Envious.

While Zadig was preparing himself for death, the king's parrot flew from its balcony and swooped down

on a rose-bush in Zadig's garden. A peach had been carried there from a neighbouring tree by the wind, and had fallen on a piece of the writing tablet, to which it had stuck. The bird picked up the peach and the tablet, and dropped them in the monarch's lap. The prince, curious, read some words which made no sense and looked like the last syllables of some verses. He liked poetry, and there is always hope for princes who like poetry. His parrot's adventure set him thinking. The queen, remembering what had been written on a piece of Zadig's tablet, had it brought to her. The two pieces were put together, and arranged themselves perfectly. The verses then read as Zadig had written them :—

“ Through prodigies of vice great this earth's troubles are,
Established on his throne the king brooks no abuse,
Amidst the public peace Love only wages war :
He is the foe alone who needs stir fear in us.”

The king at once ordered Zadig to be brought before him, and his two friends and the beautiful lady to be released. Zadig threw himself on the ground at the feet of the king and queen, and very humbly begged their pardon for having written some bad verse. He spoke with so much grace, wit and sense that the king and queen had a fancy to see him again. He returned, and pleased them still more. They awarded him all the goods of The Envious, who had accused him unjustly. But Zadig gave everything back, and The Envious was touched by nothing but his joy at not losing his belongings.

Day by day the king's esteem for Zadig grew. He made him a participant in all his pleasures, and consulted him in all his affairs. From that time the queen looked on him with a graciousness that might become dangerous for her, for her august husband the king and for the kingdom. Zadig began to think that it was not so difficult to be happy.



CHAPTER V

THE GENEROUS MAN



THE time approached for celebrating the great quinquennial feast. It was the custom in Babylon to proclaim solemnly every five years the citizen who had performed the most generous action. The grandees and the Magi were the judges. The chief satrap, who was charged with the care of the town, announced the finest actions which had taken place during his tenure of office. The vote was put, and then the king pronounced judgment. To this solemn ceremony people came from the ends of the earth. The winner received from the monarch's hands a golden goblet studded with precious stones, and the king said these words to him: "Receive this prize for generosity, and may the gods send me many more subjects like you!"

When the memorable day arrived, the king appeared on his throne surrounded by grandees, Magi and delegates of all the nations, who came to these games where glory was won not by the fleetness of horses, or physical strength, but by virtue. The chief satrap announced in a loud voice the actions which might earn for their authors this priceless prize. He did not mention the magnanimity with which Zadig had returned to The Envious all his fortune: that was not an action that deserved to compete for the prize.

He presented first of all a judge, who, having made a citizen lose an important lawsuit by a mistake for which he was not even responsible, had given him his entire wealth, which was equal in value to what the other had lost.

Then he produced a young man, who, in spite of his love for the girl he was going to marry, had ceded her to a friend who was almost dying of love for her, and in addition had even paid her dowry.

His next was a soldier, who in the Hircanian war had given an even greater example of generosity. Some enemy soldiers were carrying off his mistress, and he was defending her against them, when he learned that other Hircanians a few steps away were carrying off his mother. In tears, he left his mistress and rushed to deliver his mother. He returned later to his beloved, and found her dying. He wanted to kill himself, but his mother protested that he was her sole support, and he had the courage to endure living.

The judges favoured this soldier. The king spoke. "His action," he said, "and these other actions are fine, but they do not astonish me. Yesterday Zadig did something that amazed me. A few days ago I disgraced Coreb, my minister and favourite. I had a bitter complaint against him, and all my courtiers assured me I was too lenient: it was a competition to see who could say the worst of Coreb. I asked Zadig what he thought, and he dared speak well of the man. I have seen in history examples of men who have paid for an error with their wealth, of men who ceded their mistresses, or who have put their mothers before the objects of their adoration, but I have never read of a courtier who spoke well of a disgraced minister who had incurred his king's wrath. I give twenty thousand pieces of gold to each of those whose generous actions have just been told me, but I give the goblet to Zadig."

"Sire," said Zadig, "it is Your Majesty alone deserves

the goblet. It is he who has performed the most unheard of action in not letting his royal wrath rise against the slave who opposed his passion."

Both the king and Zadig were accounted splendid. The judge who had given his wealth, the lover who had married his mistress to his friend, the soldier who had preferred his mother's safety to his mistress's, received the king's gifts and saw their names inscribed in the Book of Generosity: Zadig had the goblet. The king acquired the reputation of being a good prince, the which he did not keep long. The day was sanctified by merry-making longer than the law stipulated. The memory of it still remains in Asia.

"At last I am happy!" said Zadig. But he was mistaken.





CHAPTER VI

THE MINISTER

THE king had lost his prime minister. He chose Zadig to fill the post. All the beautiful ladies of Babylon applauded this choice, for since the foundation of the empire they had never had so young a minister. All the courtiers were vexed. The Envious had an attack of blood-spitting when he heard the news, and his nose swelled up prodigiously.

Having thanked the king and queen, Zadig went to thank the parrot also. "Beautiful bird," he said, "it is you who have saved my life and made me prime minister. Their majesties' horse and bitch did me much harm, but you have done me good. Behold on what a man's fate depends! But," he added, "so strange a piece of good fortune will perhaps soon disappear."

"Yes," answered the parrot.

This word struck Zadig. As, however, he was a good natural philosopher and did not believe that parrots were prophets, he reassured himself and set about his duties as a minister to the best of his ability.

He made everybody feel the sacred power of the law, and nobody the weight of his importance. He did not muzzle the council of state, and let each vizier have an opinion without being affronted. When he judged a

case it was not he who judged, but the law. When, however, the law was too severe he made it more lenient: and when there were no laws, his equity invented such as might have been taken for those of Zarathustra.

It is from him that the nations possess the great principle that it is better to try to save a guilty man than to condemn an innocent. He believed that the laws were made as much to help citizens as to intimidate them. His principal gift was that of deciphering the truth, which all men try to obscure, and from the earliest days of his administration he put this great gift to use.

A famous Babylonian merchant had died in the Indies. He had bequeathed his fortune to his two sons equally, after they had given their sister in marriage, and he left a present of thirty thousand pieces of gold to the son who should be judged to love him most. The elder son built his father a tomb, the younger increased his sister's dowry by a part of his own heritage. Everyone said—"The elder loves his father best, the other thinks more of his sister: the elder should have the thirty thousand pieces of gold."

Zadig had them brought before him separately. "Your father is not dead," he said to the elder son. "He has recovered from his last illness, and is returning to Babylon."

"God be praised!" replied the young man, "but there's a tomb which has cost me a pretty penny."

Zadig made the same remark to the second son.

"God be praised!" he answered. "I shall return to my father all I have, but I hope he will leave my sister what I have given her."

"You will return nothing," said Zadig, "and you shall have the thirty thousand pieces of gold. You love your father best."

A very rich girl had promised to marry two Magi, and after being trained by them both for some months,

found herself pregnant. They both wished to marry her.

"I will take for my husband," she said, "the one who has put me in the way of giving a citizen to the empire."

"Without question I am the author of this good work," said one.

"Not at all," said the other, "the privilege is mine."

"Well," she conceded, "I recognise as father of my child the man who will give him the better education."

She gave birth to a son. Both the Magi wished to rear him. The case was brought before Zadig. He sent for the two Magi. "What will you teach your ward?" he asked the first.

"I shall teach him," answered the doctor, "the eight parts of speech, logic, astrology, demonology; what is substance and what is quality, the abstract and the concrete, monads and pre-established harmony."

"I," said the second, "shall teach him to be just and worthy of having friends."

"Whether you be the father or not," declared Zadig, "you shall marry the mother."

Every day complaints were received at court against Irax, the Ilimadod-Dowlet of Media. Irax was a great lord, who at bottom was not bad, but who had been corrupted by vanity and luxurious pleasure. He rarely allowed anyone to speak to him, and never did anyone dare contradict him. The peacocks are not more vain, the doves not more voluptuous, the tortoises less lazy. He thirsted for false glory and false pleasure only, and Zadig undertook to reform him.

He sent in the king's name a band-master with twelve singers and twenty-four fiddlers, a steward with six cooks, and four chamberlains, who were not to leave him for a moment. The king's orders were that the following etiquette was to be strictly observed: and this is what happened.

On the first day, as soon as the voluptuary was awake,

the band-master entered his room followed by the orchestra and choir. They sang a cantata, lasting two hours, the refrain of which, recurring every three minutes, was as follows :

“ The merit of my lord is great !
Ah ! what charms ! what qualities !
He must be glad to contemplate
What a splendid man he is ! ”

After the execution of the cantata a chamberlain harangued him for three-quarters of an hour, praising expressly all the good qualities the voluptuary lacked. The harangue over, he was conducted to table to the sound of instruments. The dinner lasted three hours. As soon as he opened his mouth to speak, the chief chamberlain said—“ He’s sure to be right.” Hardly had he pronounced four words than the second chamberlain said—“ He is right.” The other two chamberlains laughed loudly at the witticisms which Irax made or ought to have made. After dinner they repeated the cantata.

This first day seemed delightful to him. He thought the king of kings was honouring him according to his merit. The second day was less agreeable. The third was tiresome, the fourth unbearable, the fifth a torture. Finally, incensed at hearing the perpetual cry :

“ He must be glad to contemplate
What a splendid man he is ! ”

at hearing he was always right, and at being harangued every day at the same time, he wrote to the court begging the king to deign to recall his chamberlains, musicians and steward. He promised thenceforward to be less vain and more industrious. He arranged to have less flattery and fewer feasts, and was all the happier : for, as the Sadder says (7)—Pleasure always is not pleasure.



CHAPTER VII

DISPUTES AND AUDIENCES

N this wise did Zadig show every day the subtlety of his genius and the goodness of his soul. In spite of being accounted a marvel he was loved. He passed for the luckiest of men. The whole empire swelled with his name. He was ogled by all the women and praised by all citizens for his fairness. **■■■■■** The scholars looked on him as their oracle, and even the priests admitted he knew more than Yébor, the aged Archmagus. They were far from prosecuting him about griffons: they credited only what he thought credible.

For fifteen hundred years there had been in Babylon a great dispute which had split the empire into two stubborn sects. The first claimed that one should always enter the temple of Mithra with the left foot: the other held this custom in abomination, and never entered but with the right foot. They awaited the day of the Festival of the Sacred Fire to see which sect Zadig would favour. The universe had its eyes on his two feet, and the whole city was in a state of agitated suspense. Zadig entered the temple by jumping with his feet together, and proved later in an eloquent speech that the God of heaven and earth, who has no respect of persons, does not esteem the left leg more than the right, or the right more than the left.

The Envious and his wife maintained that there were

not enough figures of speech in his discourse, and that he had not made the hills and mountains dance enough. "He is too dry," they said. "He has no genius. When he talks one does not see the ocean take to flight, or the stars fall, or the sun melt like wax. He lacks the good flowery Asiatic style."

Zadig was content to have the style of good sense. Everyone was on his side, not because he was what a man should be, not because he was wise, not because he was lovable, but just because he was grand vizier.

He wound up equally happily the great quarrel between the white Magi and the black Magi. The whites maintained that it was impious, when offering prayer to God, to turn towards the east in winter: the blacks were certain that God held in abomination the prayers of men who turned towards the west in summer. Zadig's order was that people might turn as they pleased.

He learned thus the secret of disposing of particular and general business in the morning: for the rest of the day he occupied himself in improving Babylon. He arranged for tragedies to be presented that made the people cry, and comedies that made them laugh: this had been long out of fashion, and he revived the custom because he was a man of taste. He did not claim to know more about the plays than the players; he rewarded them with favours and distinctions, and did not envy their talents in secret. In the evening he entertained the king and queen very much, particularly the queen. The king spoke of "Our great minister!" The queen of "Our amiable minister!" And both added—"It would have been a great pity if he had been hanged."

Never was a man of high position compelled to give so many audiences to the ladies. Most of them came to talk about affairs of state in which they had no interest so as to have a love-affair with him in which they had much. The wife of The Envious presented herself

among the first. She swore to him by Mithra, by the Zend-Avesta and by the sacred fire, that she had detested her husband's conduct. She then confided that her husband was jealous and brutal to her. She let Zadig understand that the gods were punishing him by refusing him the precious gifts of that sacred fire which alone makes man like the gods. She finished by letting her garter fall. With his usual courtesy Zadig picked it up, but did not fasten it on the lady's knee again, and this slight omission—if indeed it be one—was the cause of the most dreadful troubles. Zadig thought no more about it, but the wife of The Envious thought much.

Other ladies came every day. The secret annals of Babylon maintain that Zadig succumbed on one occasion, but that he was quite astonished to find himself possessing his paramour without pleasure, and kissing her absent-mindedly. She to whom he gave, almost without perceiving it, the marks of his favour, was one of Queen Astarte's chamber-maids. This affectionate Babylonian girl sought to console herself for Zadig's preoccupation by saying to herself—"This man must have a vast number of things in his head, seeing that he thinks about them even when he is loving me." At one of those moments when many people are completely silent, and others pronounce only the most sacred words, Zadig, forgetting himself, cried out suddenly—"The queen." The Babylonian girl thought that at last he had come to his senses, and at an appropriate moment, and had said to her—"My queen." But Zadig, still very pre-occupied, uttered the name of Astarte. The lady, who at these joyous moments interpreted everything in her own favour, thought he meant—You are more beautiful than Queen Astarte.

She left Zadig's harem with some very fine presents, and went off to narrate her adventure to the wife of The Envious, who was her close friend. The latter was cruelly piqued by Zadig's preference. "He did not

even deign," she said, "to put my garter on for me. Here it is: I do not care to wear it any more."

"Oh! oh!" said the lucky girl, "you wear the same garters as the queen! Do you buy them from the same maker?"

The wife of The Envious thought deeply, answered nothing, and went to consult her husband.

And Zadig noticed that when he was giving audiences and when he was judging cases he was always pre-occupied. His only trouble was that he did not know to what to attribute his preoccupation.

He had a dream. He seemed at first to be reclining on some dry grasses of which some of the stems pricked and disturbed him. When afterwards he was reposing comfortably on a bed of rose-leaves, a snake came out of the flowers and struck him in the heart with its sharp, poisonous tongue. "Alas!" he said. "I have long been resting on these dry and prickly plants, and now I am on the bed of roses. . . . But who will be the snake?"





CHAPTER VIII

JEALOUSY



ADIG'S bad luck was due really to his good luck and, above all, to his merit. Every day he talked with the king and with Astarte, the king's august spouse. The charm of his conversation was heightened by that desire to please, which is to the mind what jewels are to beauty. His youth and attractiveness gradually made an impression on Astarte which at first she did not notice. Her passion grew without her in her innocence realising it. Without fear or scruple Astarte gave herself up to the pleasure of seeing and hearing a young man dear to her husband and to the state. She never ceased praising him to the king ; she talked of him to her ladies-in-waiting, who surpassed her in their panegyrics. Everything helped to drive into her heart the arrow she did not feel. She gave Zadig presents in which there was more tender coquetry than she guessed. She thought she spoke to him merely as a queen content with his services, and yet sometimes her utterances were those of a woman sensible to emotion.

Astarte was much more beautiful than that Sémire, who had such a hatred of one-eyed men, and that other woman who had wanted to cut off her husband's nose. Her friendliness ; the tenderness with which she spoke, and at which she was beginning to blush ; her eyes,

which she wanted to turn away, but which fixed themselves on his : all lit in Zadig's heart a fire which bewildered him. He fought against it and summoned to his aid that philosophy which hitherto had always aided him ; but now he extracted from it only wisdom and no relief. Duty, gratitude, sovereign majesty outraged—all these things appeared before his eyes like avenging gods. He fought and he triumphed, but this victory had to be repeated every moment, and it cost him many groans and tears. No longer did he dare speak to the queen with that easy freedom that had been so charming for them both. His eyes were covered with a mist, his words were stiff and inconsequent. He kept his eyes on the ground, and when, in spite of himself, they turned towards Astarte, they found the queen's eyes wet with tears, but kindling with passion. They seemed to be saying—"We love each other and we fear our love : we are both burning with a fire we condemn."

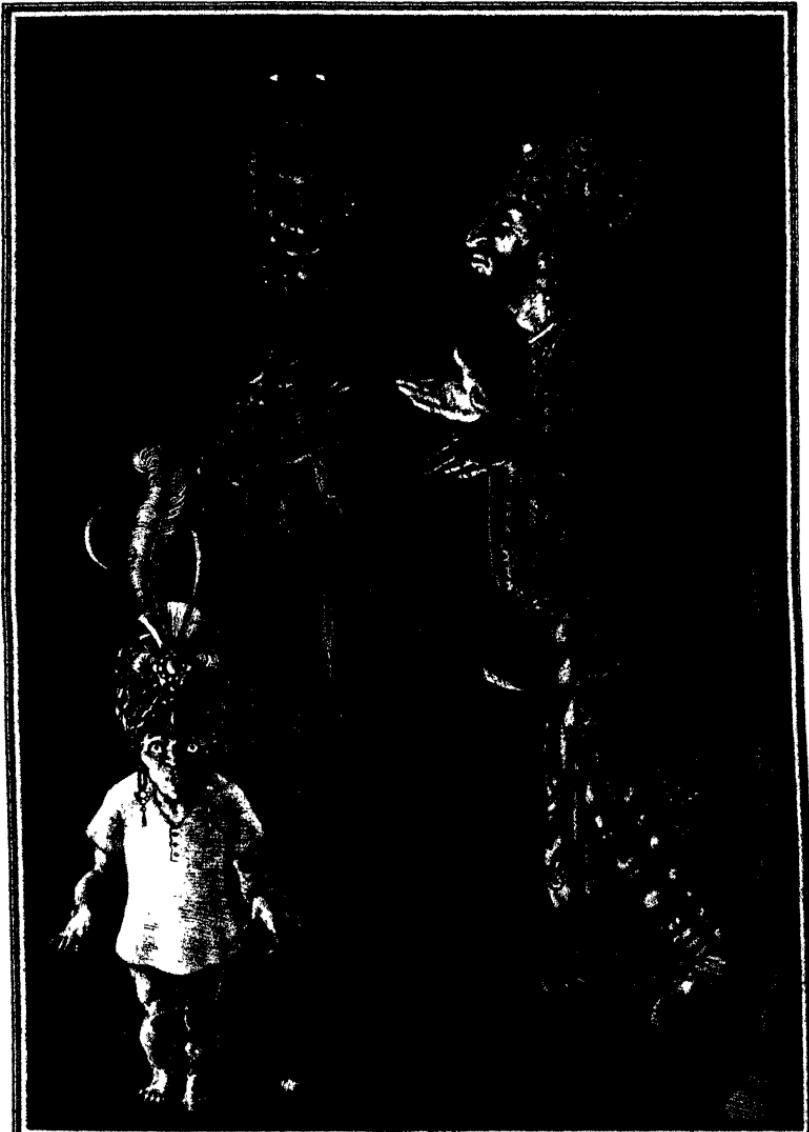
Zadig left her bewildered and distracted, his heart weighed down with a burden he could bear no longer. In the violence of his emotion he let his friend Cador penetrate his secret, like a man who, after long suffering attacks of sharp pain, proclaims his ill by a cry wrenched from him in a moment of more than ordinary agony, and by the cold sweat on his forehead.

"Love shows signs that cannot be mistaken," said Cador. "I have already fathomed the passion you yourself wished to hide. Do you think, my dear Zadig, seeing that I have read your heart, that the king will not discover a sentiment which is an offence against him ? His only fault is that he is the most jealous of men. You resist your passion more strongly than the queen because you are a philosopher and because you are Zadig. Astarte is a woman : she lets her face speak with all the more imprudence because she still believes herself to be innocent. Reassured unfortunately as to her freedom from guilt, she neglects necessary appear-

ances. I shall tremble for her so long as she has no reason for self-reproach. If there is an understanding between you, you will know how to gull everyone. A budding passion which is resisted proclaims itself: satisfied love knows how to hide."

Zadig shuddered at the idea of playing the king false, of deceiving his benefactor, and he was never more loyal to his prince than when he was guilty of an involuntary crime against him. The queen, however, pronounced Zadig's name so often, her face flushed so much in pronouncing it when she spoke to him in the king's presence, she was at times so animated and at others so abashed, she fell into such profound reveries after he had gone, that the king was troubled. He considered all he saw, and imagined all he did not see. He noticed particularly that his wife's slippers were blue and that Zadig's slippers were also blue, that her ribbons were yellow and that Zadig's cap was also yellow. These were indeed terrible portents for a prince of delicate sensibilities. In his embittered state of mind suspicion became certainty.

The slaves who serve kings and queens also spy on their hearts. They soon fathomed that Astarte was in love and that Moabdar was jealous. The Envious prevailed on his wife to send the king her garter, which resembled the queen's. As a crowning misfortune this garter was blue. The king thought of nothing but how he should be revenged. He resolved one night to poison the queen, and have Zadig strangled at dawn. The order for Zadig's death was given to a pitiless eunuch, the executor of the king's vengeance. It chanced that there was in the king's room a little dwarf who was dumb, but not deaf. He was always allowed to be present, and witnessed the most secret happenings, like a domestic animal. This little dumb fellow was very attached to the queen and Zadig, and he heard with as much surprise as horror the order given for their death.



*He heard the Order
given*

But how to stop this terrible order, which would be executed before so few hours had elapsed ? He did not know how to write, but he had learned to paint, and knew especially how to draw likenesses. He spent a part of the night pencilling what he wanted the queen to understand. His picture showed the king in a fury in one corner, giving orders to the eunuch : a blue cord and a bowl on a table, with blue garters and yellow ribbons : the queen in the middle dying in her women's arms, and Zadig lying strangled at her feet. On the horizon was a rising sun, to show that this horrible execution was to take place at the first sign of day. As soon as he had finished this work, he ran to one of Astarte's women, waked her, and made her understand she must take this picture to the queen at once.

In the middle of the night someone knocked on Zadig's door, waked him and gave him a note from the queen. He wondered if he was dreaming, and opened the letter with trembling hands. What was his surprise, and who could express his consternation and despair, when he read these words :—“ Fly at once, or your life will be forfeit ! Fly, Zadig ! In the name of our love and my yellow ribbons I command you. Fly ! Up to now I have been innocent, but I feel I shall die guilty.”

Zadig had barely the strength to speak. He ordered Cador to be fetched, and without saying a word gave him the note. Cador forced him to obey and take the road to Memphis at once. “ If you dare go to find the queen,” he said, “ you hasten her death. If you speak to the king, you lose her equally. I charge myself with her fate : look after your own. I will spread a rumour that you have taken the road to India. I will soon come to find you and let you know what has happened in Babylon.”

Cador gave the order at once to bring two of the fleetest dromedaries to a secret door of the palace. He had Zadig, who was at the point of giving up the ghost,

hoisted on to the back of one of them. Only one servant accompanied him, and soon Cador, plunged in grief and amazement, lost his friend from sight.

The illustrious fugitive, reaching the side of a hill whence he could look back on Babylon, turned his eyes to the queen's palace, and fainted. He regained consciousness only to weep and pray for death. At last, after brooding on the calamitous fate of the most lovable of women and the greatest queen in the world, he made an effort to collect himself, and cried—"What, then, is human life? O virtue, how have you served me? Two women have deceived me infamously: the third, who is not guilty at all and is more beautiful than the others, is about to die! All the good in me has never been productive of anything but curses, and I have risen to the height of splendour only to fall into the most terrible abyss of misfortune. If, like so many others, I had been a miscreant, I should be as happy as they are!"

Worn out by these sad reflections, his eyes veiled with sorrow, the pallor of death on his face, he continued on the road to Egypt.





CHAPTER IX

THE WOMAN WHO WAS FLOGGED



ADIG set his course by the stars. The constellation of Orion and the brilliant star Sirius guided him towards the pole of Canopus. He admired these vast globes of light, which to our eyes seem only feeble sparks, whereas the earth, which is only an imperceptible point in nature, appears to our self-importance something so great and so splendid. He pictured men as they really are, insects devouring each other on a little patch of mud. This image of the truth seemed to annihilate his misfortunes as he reviewed his own complete unimportance and Babylon's. His soul fled into the infinite and, detached from his senses, contemplated the unchanging order of the universe. But when, later, he returned to himself and, probing his heart, thought that perhaps Astarte was dead on his account, the universe disappeared altogether, and in the whole of nature he saw nothing but Astarte dying and Zadig luckless.

Giving himself up to this flux and reflux of sublime philosophy and overwhelming anguish, he moved on towards the frontiers of Egypt. His faithful servant was already in the first small town, where he sought lodgings, while Zadig wandered towards the gardens on its outskirts. Not far from the high road he saw a woman in distress, who called on heaven and earth for

help, and a man who was pursuing her in fury. He had already caught up with her, and she was clasping his knees. This man loaded her with reproaches and blows. Zadig judged from the Egyptian's violence and the pardon which the woman repeatedly begged, that she was unfaithful and he jealous ; but when he looked more closely at her—she had a pathetic beauty, and resembled Astarte somewhat—he felt himself filled with pity for her and horror for the Egyptian.

“Save me !” she cried to Zadig, sobbing. “Take me away from this savage ! Save me ! Save me !”

At these cries Zadig rushed to throw himself between her and the savage. He had some knowledge of Egyptiæ, and spoke in that language. “If you have any humanity in you,” he said, “I implore you to respect beauty and weakness. Can you thus defile one of nature’s master-pieces, who lies at your feet with nothing for her defence but tears ?”

“Ho ! Ho !” cried the frenzied Egyptian. “So you’re in love with her too ! You’re just the man I’m looking for to get my own back ! Ho ! Ho !”

With these words he let go of the lady, whose hair he held in one hand, and seizing his spear lunged at the stranger. Zadig, who had a cool head, easily escaped the madman’s spear, and seized it close to the iron tip. One tried to keep the spear, the other to tear it away, and it snapped in their hands. The Egyptian drew his sword, Zadig did likewise, and they attacked. With a rush the Egyptian struck a hundred blows, which Zadig parried easily. The lady, seated on a patch of grass, put her hair straight and watched the fight. The Egyptian was the stronger, but Zadig was more skilful and fought like a man whose hand is guided by his head, whereas the other was like a madman whose blind rage guides his movements by chance. Zadig made a thrust and disarmed him. The Egyptian, madder than ever, tried to throw himself on Zadig. Zadig seized him,

crushed him in his arms, and forced him to the ground, his sword at the Egyptian's breast : he then offered to spare his life. The Egyptian, beside himself with rage, drew a dagger and wounded Zadig at the very moment his conqueror was offering him mercy. Exasperated, Zadig plunged his sword into the Egyptian's bosom. The Egyptian died, writhing.

Zadig turned to the lady. "He forced me to kill him," he said humbly. "I have avenged you : you are delivered from the most violent man I have ever seen. What do you desire of me now, Madam ? "

"That you die, dog !" she shrieked. "That you die ! You have killed my lover. I wish I could tear your heart out, you scoundrel ! "

"Really, Madam," replied Zadig, "you had a very strange man for a lover. He beat you as hard as he could, and wanted to kill me because you begged my help."

"I wish he would beat me again !" screamed the lady. "I deserved it, I made him jealous. Oh ! God ! if only he would beat me ! If only you were in his place ! "

"Beautiful as you are," said Zadig, more surprised and angry than he had ever been in his life, "you are so preposterous that you deserve a good beating from me in my turn ; but I won't take the trouble."

Whereupon he mounted his camel again and set off towards the town. Hardly had he started than he turned again at the noise made by four couriers from Babylon. They came along at full speed. One of them, seeing the woman, cried out—"That's her ! She's just like the picture they made for us." They did not bother about the dead man, but seized the woman forthwith. She did not stop crying to Zadig—"Save me once more, generous stranger ! I beg your pardon for having been cross with you. Save me, and I am yours till death ! "

The desire to do any more fighting for her had left Zadig. "Let someone else save you," he answered. "You won't catch me again." Besides, he was wounded, his blood was flowing, he needed help himself, and the sight of the four Babylonians, sent probably by Moabdar, filled him with disquiet. He moved on to the town with all speed, not guessing why four couriers from Babylon should carry off this Egyptian woman, but still very astonished at the lady's nature.





CHAPTER X

SLAVERY



He entered the Egyptian town he was surrounded by the townsmen.

“That’s the man who carried off beautiful Missouf !” they all cried.
“That’s the man who has just murdered Clétofis !”

“Gentlemen,” said Zadig, “God preserve me from ever carrying off your beautiful Missouf—she is too capricious: and as regards Clétofis, I did not murder him at all; I merely defended myself against him. He wanted to kill me because I had very meekly asked mercy for beautiful Missouf, whom he was beating cruelly. I am a stranger seeking asylum in Egypt, and it is unlikely that in coming to ask your protection I should begin by carrying off a woman and murdering a man.”

The Egyptian people were at that time humane and just. The townsmen led Zadig to the town hall. They started by dressing his wound, and then questioned him and his servant separately in order to learn the truth. They recognised that Zadig was not in the least a murderer, but he had shed a man’s blood. The law condemned him to be a slave. His two camels were sold for the benefit of the town, and all the gold he had brought with him was distributed among the townsmen. His person, with that of his travelling companion, was offered for sale in the market-place.

An Arab merchant named Sétoc bid for them, but the servant, who was more suited to manual labour, fetched a much better price than the master. The individual qualities of each man were not taken into consideration, and so Zadig was a slave subordinate to his servant. They were tied together with a chain round their feet, and in this state followed the Arab merchant home. On the way Zadig consoled his servant and exhorted him to patience, but, as was his habit, made some observations on human life.

“I see,” he said, “that the misfortunes of my destiny spread themselves over yours. Everything up to now has moved me about in the strangest fashion. I have been condemned to a fine for seeing a bitch pass by ; I thought I was going to be impaled for the sake of a griffon ; I have been sentenced to death for writing a poem praising the king ; I have just missed being strangled because the queen had yellow ribbons, and here I am a slave with you because a brute beat his mistress. Come ! let us not lose heart ! Maybe there will be an end to all this. Arab merchants must have slaves, and why should not I be a slave like another, seeing that I am a man like another ? This merchant will not be pitiless, and he must treat his slaves well if he wishes to get any work out of them.” These were the words on his lips, but in his heart he was thinking of the fate of the queen of Babylon.

Sétoc, the merchant, left two days later for Arabia Deserta with his slaves and camels. His tribe dwelt near the desert of Horeb. The road was long and difficult. On the journey Sétoc showed much more esteem for the servant than for the master, because the former looked after the camels well : all the little marks of favour, therefore, were his.

A camel died when they were still two days’ journey away from Horeb, and its burden was distributed on the slaves’ backs : Zadig had his share. Sétoc started

laughing when he saw all his slaves marching with bent backs. Zadig took the liberty of explaining the reason to him, and of teaching him the laws of equilibrium. The astonished merchant began to look at him from a different angle. Zadig, seeing the merchant's curiosity stirred, stimulated it by telling him many things not irrelevant to his business, such as the specific gravities of metals and commodities of equal bulk, the characteristics of various useful animals, the means of making useful such as were not : with result that the merchant thought him a very learned man, and gave him preference over his comrade, whom previously he had esteemed so much. He treated Zadig well, and had no cause to repent thereof.

The first thing Sétoc did when he reached his tribe was to ask a Hebrew for the return of five hundred ounces of silver he had lent him in the presence of two witnesses. The two witnesses, however, had died, and the Hebrew, whose guilt could not be proved, appropriated the merchant's money, thanking God for giving him the means of cheating an Arab. Sétoc confided his trouble to Zadig, who had become his adviser.

"In what place," asked Zadig, "did you lend your five hundred ounces to this infidel ?"

"On a large stone," replied the merchant, "near Mount Horeb."

"What sort of man is your debtor ?" asked Zadig.

"He's a rogue," answered Sétoc.

"But I want to know what sort of man he is. Is he sharp-witted or dull, wary or rash ?"

"Of all the slow payers," said Sétoc, "he's the sharpest I've ever met."

"Well," insisted Zadig, "let me plead your cause before the judge."

And so he summoned the Hebrew before the tribunal, and spoke thus to the judge :

"Ear of the Throne of Justice," he said, "I come on behalf of my master to claim from this man the return

of five hundred ounces of silver which he will not give up."

"Have you any witnesses?" asked the judge.

"No, they are both dead, but there is still a large stone on which the money was counted, and if it please your Highness to order the stone to be fetched I hope it will bear witness. The Hebrew and I will stay here until the stone arrives. I will have it brought at my master Sétoc's expense."

"Very well," said the judge, and set to disposing of other matters.

At the end of the sitting he turned to Zadig. "Well," he said, "your stone is not here yet?"

"Your Highness might wait until to-morrow," grinned the Hebrew, "and even then the stone would not be here. It is more than six thousand miles away, and it would take fifteen men to move it."

"There!" cried Zadig. "I told you the stone would bear witness. As this man knows where it is, he confesses it is the stone on which the money was paid."

The disconcerted Hebrew was at last constrained to admit everything, and the judge ordered him to be bound to the stone and left without food or drink until he had returned the five hundred ounces of silver. They were soon returned.

The slave Zadig and the stone were held in great esteem throughout Arabia.





CHAPTER XI

THE FUNERAL PYRE

SÉTOC was enchanted and made an intimate friend of his slave. He was no more able to do without him than the king of Babylon had been. Zadig was glad Sétoc had no wife. He found in his master a natural predilection for virtue, much uprightness and good sense. He was sorry to see that Sétoc worshipped the celestial army—that is to say, the sun, moon and stars, in accordance with ancient Arabian custom. At times he spoke to him of it very discreetly. He finished by telling him that they were bodies like the others, and no more deserved his worship than a tree or a rock.

“But,” said Sétoc, “they are the Eternal Beings whence we draw all our blessings. They give life to nature and regulate the seasons, and besides, they are so far away one can barely help holding them in veneration.”

“You receive more blessings from the waters of the Red Sea,” replied Zadig, “on which is borne your merchandise from the Indies. Why should not they be as old as the stars? And if you worship what is distant you should worship the people of the Ganges, which is at the end of the earth.”

“No,” answered Sétoc, “the stars shine too brightly for me not to worship them.”

When night came Zadig lit a large number of tapers in the tent where he was to sup with Sétoc, and as soon as his patron appeared threw himself on his knees before

them and cried :—“Eternal and Radiant Lights, grant me always your favours !”—after which he sat down to table without looking at Sétoc.

“What are you doing ?” asked Sétoc, astonished.

“I do as you do,” replied Zadig. “I worship these candles, and neglect their master and mine.”

Sétoc grasped the profound meaning of this apologue. His slave’s wisdom entered his soul. He no longer burned his incense in honour of things, but worshipped the Eternal Being who had created them.

There was at that time in Arabia a ghastly custom which came originally from Scythia and, having established itself in India on the authority of the Brahmins, threatened to overrun the whole of the Orient. When a married man died and his well-beloved widow wished to be cleansed from sin, she burned herself publicly on her husband’s body. It was the solemn ceremony known as “the pyre of widowhood.” The tribe in which the most women had been burned was the most esteemed.

An Arab of Sétoc’s tribe having died, his widow, Almona by name, a very pious girl, made known the day and the hour when she would throw herself in the fire to the sound of drums and trumpets. Zadig protested to Sétoc how opposed this horrible custom was to the good of the human race. He pointed out that every day young widows were allowed to burn who might otherwise give children to the state, or at least rear those they already had, and he made him agree that such a barbarous habit should, if possible, be abolished.

“But,” said Sétoc, “women have had the privilege of burning themselves for more than a thousand years : who among us would dare alter a law thus hallowed by time ? Is there anything more worthy of respect than an abuse dating from ancient times ?”

“Well,” answered Zadig, “reason is more ancient still. Speak to the chiefs of the tribes, and I will go to find the young widow.”

He had himself presented to her and, having gained admittance to her mind by praising her beauty and saying what a pity it was to set fire to so many charms, did homage further to her constancy and courage.

“ You loved your husband enormously, then ? ” he asked her.

“ Loved him ! ” replied the Arab lady. “ Not in the least ! He was a jealous brute, an intolerable man ! But I am absolutely determined to throw myself on his funeral pyre.”

“ It seems,” said Zadig, “ that there is a quite exquisite pleasure in being burned alive.”

“ Ah ! ” said the lady, “ it makes one’s flesh creep, but one must go through with it. I am a pious woman, my reputation would be lost, and everyone would laugh at me if I did not burn myself.”

Zadig got her to agree that she was burning herself out of vanity and for other people, and then spoke to her at length in such a way as to make her love life a little. He even managed to inspire in her some friendliness for the man who was talking to her. “ What would you do,” he asked her, “ if the vanity of burning yourself ceased to possess you ? ”

“ Lack-a-day ! ” answered the lady, “ I think I should ask you to marry me.”

Zadig’s heart was too full of Astarte for him not to evade this declaration, but he went at once in search of the chiefs of the tribe, told them what had passed, and counselled them to make a law whereby it would be forbidden for a widow to burn herself unless she had had a *tête-à-tête* with a young man lasting a complete hour.

From that time forth no lady in Arabia burned herself, and the Arabians were under an obligation to Zadig for having destroyed in a day a cruel custom that had endured for so many centuries. He was therefore the benefactor of Arabia.



CHAPTER XII

THE SUPPER

SÉTOC could not part with this man in whom wisdom dwelt, and he took him to the great fair at Bassora, where the chief merchants of the inhabited world were accustomed to congregate. For Zadig it was an evident consolation to see so many men assembled in one place. The universe seemed to him to be a big family, the members of which gathered together at Bassora.

From the second day he found himself eating with an Egyptian, an Indian from the Ganges country, an inhabitant of Cathay, a Greek, a Celt and several other travellers who in their frequent travels towards the Arabian Gulf had learned enough Arabic to make themselves understood. The Egyptian seemed very wroth.

“What an accursed place Bassora is!” he said. “No one here will lend me a thousand ounces of gold on a parcel of the finest dry-goods in the world.”

“What are the dry-goods,” asked Sétoc, “on which you cannot obtain that amount?”

“My aunt’s body,” replied the Egyptian. “She was the finest woman in Egypt. She always used to accompany me, and now she has died on the road, I’ve had her made into one of the finest mummies we have. In my own country I could pawn her for as much as I

liked. It's very strange that here nobody will give me a paltry thousand ounces of gold on such solid security."

Getting angrier and angrier, he set about eating some excellent boiled fowl. The Indian took his hand and stopped him. "What are you going to do?" he cried sorrowfully.

"Eat this chicken," said the man with the mummy.

"Take care," continued the man from the Ganges, "take care! Your dead aunt's soul may have passed into this chicken's body, and you do not wish to expose yourself to the possibility of eating your aunt. To cook a chicken is a manifest outrage on nature."

"What are you talking about with your nature and your chickens?" demanded the choleric Egyptian. "We worship a bull, and many a good meal do we make of beef."

"You worship a bull! Is it possible?" said the man from the Ganges.

"Nothing more possible," answered the other. "We've done so for a hundred and thirty-five thousand years, and none of us find anything amiss in it."

"A hundred and thirty-five thousand years?" returned the Indian. "You exaggerate somewhat. Why, India has only been populated eighty-four thousand, and we're certainly older than you. Brahma forbade us to eat beef before you dreamed of putting the ox on either the altar or the spit."

"A nice booby Brahma to compare with our Apis," sneered the Egyptian. "What did your Brahma do that was so wonderful?"

"It was Brahma taught men to read and write," answered the Brahmin, "and it's to him the world owes the game of chess."

"Not a bit of it," interrupted a Chaldean seated near by; "we owe such great benefits to the fish Oannes, and it is only fair to render unto him the things that

are his. Everyone will tell you he was a divine being, that he had a golden tail and a fine human head, and that he came out of the water to preach on earth for three hours each day. He had numerous children who were all kings, as everyone knows. I have his picture at home, and I hold it in veneration, as is my duty. You may eat beef as much as you like, but it is assuredly very great sacrilege to cook fish. And besides, the origin of both of you is too recent and too ignoble for you to argue with me. The Egyptian nation counts a mere hundred and thirty-five thousand years, the Indians boast of only a paltry eighty-four thousand. WE have almanacs dating back four thousand centuries. Listen to me, renounce your follies, and I will give each of you a beautiful picture of Oannes!"

The man from Cambalu took up the conversation. "I have a great respect," he said, "for the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Greeks and Celts, for Brahma, the Bull Apis, the beautiful fish Oannes; but maybe Li or Tien (8), whichever you prefer to call him, is well worth the bulls and the fishes. I will say nothing about my own country: it is as big as the lands of Egypt, Chaldea and India put together. I do not argue about antiquity because to be happy is sufficient, and to be old precious little, but if you are talking about almanacs let me tell you the whole of Asia accepts ours—and we had some very good ones before they knew arithmetic in Chaldea."

"You're all blockheads!" cried the Greek, "the whole lot of you! Don't you know that Chaos is father of everything, that Form and Matter have set the world in the state it is?"

This Greek spoke for a long time, but was interrupted at last by the Celt, who, having drunk deeply while they were arguing, thought himself wiser than all the others. With an oath on his lips he said that only Teutath and oak-mistletoe were worth talking about, that he for his

part always carried a sprig of mistletoe in his pocket, that his ancestors the Scythians were the only people worth anything who had ever existed, that they had indeed sometimes eaten men, but that such a detail was no reason why his race should not be held in great respect. Further, he threatened that if anyone spoke ill of Teutath, he would teach him how to behave.

Thenceforward the quarrel became more heated, and Sétoc saw the moment coming when the table would be running with blood. Zadig, who had kept silence throughout the dispute, rose at last, and as the Celt seemed the maddest addressed him first. He said the Celt was quite right, and asked him for some mistletoe. He congratulated the Greek on his eloquence, and calmed all their heated spirits. To the man from Cathay he said very little, because that worthy had been the most reasonable of them all. "My friends," he wound up, "you are going to quarrel about nothing, for you all hold the same views." At these words all his listeners cried out in protest. "But is it not true," Zadig asked the Celt, "that you worship not the mistletoe but him who made the mistletoe and the oak?"

"That is so," answered the Celt.

"And you, Mr. Egyptian, you worship in a particular bull him who has given you all bulls?"

"Yes," said the Egyptian.

"The fish Oannes," he continued, "must be subject to him who made the sea and the fishes?"

"Agreed," said the Chaldean.

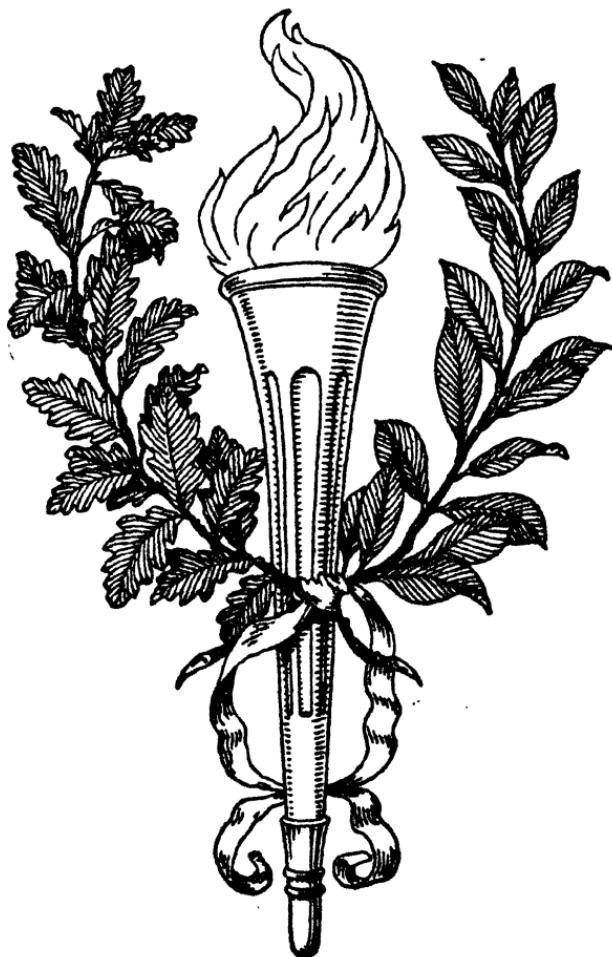
"The Indian," added Zadig, "and the Cathayan recognise a first principle as you do. I did not understand very well the admirable things the Greek said, but I am sure he too admits a superior Being on whom Form and Matter depend."

The Greek, who was much admired, said that Zadig had grasped his meaning very well.

"Well, then," continued Zadig, "you all think the

same thing, and consequently there is no reason for quarrelling."

Everyone embraced him. Sétoc, having sold his wares at very good prices, took him back to the tribe. On arriving Zadig learned that he had been tried in his absence, and condemned to be burned over a slow fire.





CHAPTER XIII

THE ASSIGNATION

L

his journey to Bassora, the priests of the stars had resolved to punish him. The trinkets and precious stones of the young women they sent to the stake were their perquisites, and it was certainly the least they could do to have Zadig burned for the trick he had played them. They accused him, therefore, of holding unorthodox opinions about the celestial army, and deposed against him on oath that they had heard him say that the stars did not sink into the sea. This appalling blasphemy made the judges shudder. They nearly tore their clothes in anguish when they heard these impious words, and doubtless they would actually have done so had Zadig had the money to pay for new ones. In their exceeding sorrow, however, they contented themselves with condemning him to be burned over a slow fire.

Sétoc, despairing, in vain used all his influence to save his friend : he was soon forced to hold his tongue. Almona, the young widow, who had developed a considerable liking for life (which she owed to Zadig), resolved to get him out of the pyre, with the abuses of which he had acquainted her. She turned her plan over in her head without mentioning it to anyone. Zadig was to be executed on the following day ; she had

only the night in which to save him. This is how she showed herself a discreet and charitable woman.

Having perfumed herself, she set off her beauty with the richest and most seductive dress she had, and went to beg secret audience of the chief priest of the stars. When she was in the presence of this venerable old man she spoke to him as follows :

“ Eldest Son of the Great Bear,” she said, “ Brother of Taurus, Cousin of the Dog-Star (these were the pontiff’s titles), I come to confide to you my twinges of conscience. I fear greatly that I have committed a terrible sin in not burning myself on my dear husband’s funeral pyre. What indeed have I saved ? Only my mortal flesh, which is already withered.” As she said these words she drew from her long silk sleeves two naked arms of beautiful shape and dazzling whiteness. “ You see,” she continued, “ how little it is worth.”

The pontiff thought in his heart that it was worth a great deal. His eyes said so, and his mouth confirmed the opinion of his eyes. He swore he had never in his life seen such lovely arms.

“ Alas,” said the widow, “ the arms may be less unlovely than the rest of me, but you will admit the neck is not worthy of my regard.” She let him see the most charming bosom nature had ever formed. A rosebud on an ivory apple would have seemed in comparison but a madder-root on a piece of boxwood, and lambs coming from the wash-pen of a brownish-yellow shade. Her neck, her great black eyes languishing with a flame of gentle fire in their depths, her ardent cheeks of the most lovely rose mingled with purest milk-white, her nose which was not like the Tower of Lebanon, her lips like two coral reefs enclosing the most beautiful pearls in the Arabian Sea—all together made the old man feel he was but twenty. Stammering, he made a declaration of love. Almona, seeing he was on fire, begged mercy for Zadig.



A Rosebud.....

"Alas, my beautiful lady!" he replied. "My indulgence would be useless alone. You would need the signatures of three of my colleagues as well."

"Anyway," said Almona, "sign for yourself."

"Willingly," returned the priest, "on condition that your favours are the price of my compliance."

"You do me too much honour," answered Almona. "You have but to come to my room when the sun has set, and as soon as the bright star Scheat is on the horizon you will find me on a rose-coloured couch which you may make use of as you will with your servant."

Carrying his signature, she left him. The old man was brimming over with love and distrust of his powers. He spent the rest of the day bathing himself, and while he waited impatiently for the star Scheat to appear drank a liqueur composed of Ceylon Cinnamon and precious spices from Tidor and Ternate.

Meanwhile, Almona went to find the second pontiff, who assured her that the sun and moon and all the stars of the firmament were but wills-o'-the-wisp compared with her charms. She begged the same mercy, and he asked the same price. She let herself be conquered, and gave to the second pontiff an assignation at the rising of the star Algenib. Thence she went to the third and fourth priests, collecting a signature each time, and making assignations from star to star. After this, she had word sent to the judges asking them to come to her house on important business. They came, and she showed the four signatures, telling the judges the price at which the priests had sold mercy for Zadig. Each priest arrived at his appointed hour, and each was much astonished to find his colleagues there and, still more, the judges, to whom their infamy was manifest.

Sétoc was so charmed with Almona's artfulness that he made her his wife.





CHAPTER XIV

THE DANCE

SÉTOC had to go on business to the Isle of Serendib, but the first month of marriage being, as we know, the honeymoon, he could not either leave his wife or think he ever would be able to leave her. He therefore asked his friend Zadig to make the journey for him.

“Alas!” said Zadig, “must I put a still greater distance between myself and beautiful Astarte? However, I cannot refuse to serve my benefactor.” After which observation, he wept and set forth.

He was not long in Serendib before he was looked upon as a remarkable man. He became the arbiter of all the differences between the merchants, the friend of the wise, the adviser of the small number of people who accept advice. The king wished to see and hear him, and soon recognised all Zadig’s worth. He had confidence in Zadig’s wisdom, and made him his friend. The king’s intimacy and esteem made Zadig tremble. Night and day he thought of the misfortune Moabdar’s goodness had brought him. “I please the king,” he said to himself. “Shall I not be lost?” However, he could not escape His Majesty’s blandishments, for it must be admitted that Nabussan, King of Serendib, son of Nussanab, son of Nabussun, son of Sanbunas,

was one of the finest princes in Asia ; and when one spoke to him it was difficult not to like him.

This good prince was praised, deceived and robbed : it was a competition as to who should despoil him of the most treasure. The Lord High Tax-Collector of the Isle of Serendib always set the example, which was faithfully followed by the others. The king was well aware of it. He had changed his comptroller many times, but had not managed to change the established fashion of dividing his revenues into two unequal parts, of which the smaller invariably went to His Majesty and the larger to his administrators.

King Nabussan confided his trouble to Zadig. " You who know so many wonderful things," he said, " do you not know a way of finding me a comptroller who will not rob me ? "

" Certainly I do," answered Zadig. " I know an infallible method of finding you a man with clean hands."

The king was delighted and, embracing him, asked how he should set about it.

" All that needs be done," said Zadig, " is to make each man who offers himself for the dignity of comptroller dance : he who dances the most lightly will be infallibly the most honest man."

" You are laughing at me," protested the king. " That would be a nice way to choose a comptroller of my finances. What ! you claim that the man who can best do an *entrechat* will make the most upright and competent treasurer ! "

" I do not promise he will be the most competent," replied Zadig, " but I do assure you he will undoubtedly be the most honest."

Zadig spoke so confidently that the king thought he had some supernatural secret for recognising comptrollers.

" I am not fond of the supernatural," said Zadig. " Claimants to magical powers, whether they be men or books, have always displeased me. If your Majesty

will permit me to make the test I propose, you will be quite convinced that my secret is the simplest and easiest thing in the world."

Nabussan, King of Serendib, was far more astonished to learn that the secret was so simple than if he had been told it was a miracle. "Very well, then," he said, "do as you think fit."

"Leave it to me," returned Zadig. "By this test you will gain more than you think."

The same day he announced in the king's name that all those who claimed the high office of Comptroller of the Pence of His Gracious Majesty Nabussan, son of Nussanab, were to present themselves, clad in light silk clothes, in the king's antechamber on the first day of the moon of the Crocodile. Sixty-four applicants arrived. Violin-players had been stationed in an apartment near by, and everything was ready for the ball. The door of this apartment remained closed, however, and to enter it was necessary to pass through a little gallery in semi-obscurity. An usher sought and presented the candidates one after the other. Each was left alone in this passage for a few minutes. The king, who had had the word, had spread all his treasures in this gallery. When all the claimants had passed into the apartment where the fiddlers were, the king commanded them to dance. Never did anyone trip it on the light fantastic toe with more clumsiness or less grace. All the dancers kept their heads bowed, their backs bent, their hands glued to their sides. "What a lot of rogues!" murmured Zadig under his breath.

Only one of them stepped out nimbly, his head held high, a look of assurance in his eyes, his arms outstretched, body erect, firm on his legs. "Ah! the honest fellow," said Zadig, "the good chap!"

The king embraced this good dancer and declared him comptroller. All the others were punished and taxed with the greatest justice in the world, for each,

during the time he was in the gallery, had filled his pockets, and could scarcely walk. The king was sorry for human nature that out of sixty-four dancers sixty-three were thieves. The dark gallery was called "The Corridor of Temptation." In Persia these sixty-three gentlemen would have been impaled ; in some countries a court of justice would have been constituted, which would have absorbed three times the amount of the money stolen and brought nothing back to the king's coffers ; in another kingdom the robbers would have vindicated themselves and had such a light dancer disgraced ; in Serendib they were condemned merely to add to the public funds, for Nabussan was very lenient.

He was also very grateful, and gave Zadig a greater sum of money than any treasurer had ever stolen from a royal master. Zadig used it to send the fleetest courier to Babylon to obtain information about Astarte's fate. His voice trembled as he gave the order, the blood ebbed in his heart, his eyes clouded, his spirit was near leaving him. The courier set off. Zadig saw him embark, and then returned to the palace seeing nobody, thinking he was in his own room, with the word "love" on his lips.

"Ah ! love !" said the king. "That's just the trouble. What a great man you are ! You have guessed what's bothering me ! I hope you will teach me how to recognise a faithful woman as successfully as you have shown me how to find a disinterested treasurer ! "

Zadig came to himself and promised to serve the king in love as he had in finance, although this seemed still more difficult.





CHAPTER XV

BLUE EYES

“**M**Y body,” said the king to Zadig, “and my heart . . .” “I’m glad you didn’t say ‘my heart and my mind,’ ” broke in Zadig, who could not restrain himself from interrupting his Majesty. “Those are the only words one hears in Babylonian conversation, and there’s not a book that doesn’t deal with the heart and the mind, written by persons who have neither. But I pray you, Sire, continue.”

“My body and my heart,” resumed Nabussan, “are born to love. The first of these two sovereign powers has every chance of satisfaction, for I have at my disposal a hundred wives, all beautiful, complaisant, attentive, voluptuous even—or at least pretending to be so with me. My heart is not anywhere near so happy. I have found only too often that the King of Serendib has most of the kisses, and Nabussan precious few. Not that I think my wives unfaithful, but I want to find a soul to possess. I would give all the charms I own in my hundred beauties for one such treasure. See if among these hundred sultanesses you can find one who I can be sure will love me.”

Zadig answered as he had in the case of the treasures —“Sire, leave it to me, but first of all let me dispose of what you have spread out in the Gallery of Tempta-

tion: I will render you a good account of it, and you shall lose nothing."

The king gave him absolute control. He picked in Serendib thirty-three of the ugliest little hunchbacks he could find, thirty-three of the handsomest pages, and thirty-three of the sturdiest and most eloquent bonzes. He gave all of them liberty to enter the sultanesses' apartments. Each little hunchback had four thousand pieces of gold to bestow, and from the first day all the hunchbacks were lucky. The pages, who had but themselves to offer, triumphed after two or three days only. The bonzes had a little more trouble still, but thirty-three pious ladies finished by yielding to them. The king watched all these tests through blinds which allowed him to see into the apartments, and he was amazed. Of his hundred wives ninety-nine succumbed before his eyes. There remained but one young girl, a new arrival, to whom his Majesty had never had access. One, two, three hunchbacks were separated from the rest, and they offered her as much as twenty thousand pieces: she was incorruptible, and could not refrain from laughing at the hunchbacks' idea that money made them a better shape. The two handsomest pages were presented to her, and she said she thought the king more handsome. The most eloquent bonze was left with her, and later, the boldest. She found the first a chatterbox, and did not deign even to suspect the second had any merit.

"The heart is all that counts," she said; "I shall never give myself to a hunchback's gold, a youth's graces or a bonze's seducements. I shall love Nabussan, son of Nussanab, only, and wait until he deigns to love me."

The king was in transports of delight, astonishment and love. He took back all the money that had made the hunchbacks successful and presented it to beautiful Falide, which was the name of the young person. He gave her his heart, and she was indeed worthy of it.

Never was the flower of youth more radiant, never were beauty's charms more entrancing. As this story is true, the fact must not be suppressed that she curtsied badly, but she danced like the fairies, sang like the sirens, and spoke like the Graces: she brimmed with talents and virtues.

Nabussan, loved at last, adored her. Unfortunately she had blue eyes, and they were the source of the greatest misfortunes. There happened to be a law which forbade kings to love one of those women whom the Greeks have called *βοῶπτις* (9). The chief bonze had decreed this law more than five thousand years before. It was so that he might get the first king of Serendib's mistress for himself that this chief bonze had incorporated in the constitution of the state a ban on blue eyes. All classes in the empire came to Nabussan to protest. It was said openly that the last days of the kingdom were at hand, that this abomination was the last word, that the whole of nature was threatened by a disastrous event—in short, that Nabussan, son of Nussanab, loved two big blue eyes. The hunchbacks, the treasurers, the bonzes and the ladies with brown eyes, filled the kingdom with their lamentations.

The savage races which dwelt in the north of Serendib profited by the general discontent. They invaded the country of good Nabussan, who asked his people for supplies. The bonzes owned half the revenues of the state, and they contented themselves with raising their hands to heaven and refusing to put them in their coffers to help the king. They chanted nice tuneful prayers, and left the country a prey to the barbarians.

"O my dear Zadig," sighed Nabussan sadly, "will you help me once more out of my terrible distress?"

"With the greatest of pleasure," answered Zadig. "You shall have as much of the bonzes' money as you want. Abandon the lands where their castles are, and defend only your own."

Nabussan followed this advice, and the bonzes came and fell at his feet begging for help. The king answered them with beautiful songs of which the words were prayers to heaven for the preservation of their lands. In the end the bonzes gave up some money, and the king finished the war happily.

In this way Zadig, by his wise and excellent counsel, attracted to himself the irreconcilable enmity of the most powerful people in the state. The bonzes and the brown-eyed women swore his ruin ; the treasurers and the hunchbacks did not spare him : good Nabussan was led to suspect him. As Zarathustra says—Services rendered often remain in the antechamber, while suspicions enter the cabinet. Every day fresh accusations were made against him. The first is repulsed, the second blossoms, the third wounds, the fourth kills.

Zadig was dismayed, and as he had completed his friend Sétoc's business satisfactorily and had forwarded him his money, he thought of nothing but leaving the island. He resolved to go to seek news of Astarte himself, "for," he said, "if I stay in Serendib the bonzes will have me impaled—but where shall I go ? I shall be a slave in Egypt, burned alive in Arabia so far as I can tell, strangled in Babylon. However, I must know what has happened to Astarte. Let me away, and see what my sad destiny has in store for me."





CHAPTER XVI

THE BRIGAND



N reaching the frontier which separates Arabia Petraea from Syria, as he was passing near a fairly well fortified castle, some armed Arabs came out. He saw he was surrounded. "All you have belongs to us!" cried his aggressors, "and your person belongs to our master!"

In reply, Zadig drew his sword, as did his body-servant, who was a brave fellow. They killed the first Arabs who touched them. The number increased, but Zadig and his servant were not taken by surprise. They resolved to die fighting. Two men's struggle against a multitude could not last long. The owner of the castle, seeing Zadig's prodigies of valour from a window, took a liking to him. He came down in haste from his window, dispersed his men, and freed the two travellers.

"Everything that passes over my land," he told them, "belongs to me, as well as everything I find on other people's land; but you seem such a brave chap that I exempt you from the common law." He made Zadig enter his castle, and ordered his men to treat him well. That evening Arbogad had a fancy to sup with Zadig.

The lord of this castle was one of those Arabs whom we call "brigands," but amid the multitude of his bad actions he sometimes did a good one. He robbed with furious rapacity, and gave liberally; fearless in battle,

he was pleasant enough in social intercourse ; a debauchee at table, and gay in his debauchery ; and remarkable for his frankness. Zadig pleased him very much ; his conversation grew lively and made the meal draw out.

“ Well,” said Arbogad at last, “ I advise you to enlist in my service. You won’t do better ! This trade isn’t too bad ! And one day you may even become what I am.”

“ May I ask,” queried Zadig, “ how long you have practised this noble profession ? ”

“ Ever since I was a boy,” answered the chieftain. “ I was body-slave to a fairly intelligent Arab, but I found my job unbearable. It made me despair to see that fate had not reserved me my bit of the earth which belongs equally to all men. I confided my troubles to an old Arab, who said to me—‘ My son, do not despair. Once upon a time there was a grain of sand which lamented that it was one unknown speck in the desert. After some years it became a diamond, and now it is the finest jewel in the crown of the Emperor of the Indies.’

“ This speech made an impression on me : I was the grain of sand, and I resolved to become a diamond. I started by stealing two horses. I surrounded myself with comrades and prepared to rob small caravans. In this way did I reduce the initial disproportion between myself and other men. I had my share of the good things of this world, I had even usurious compensation, I was much esteemed, I became brigand chief, I acquired this castle by force. The Satrap of Syria wanted to dispossess me of it, but I was already too rich to have anything to fear. I gave money to the satrap, in consideration of which I kept my castle, and I increased my domains. I was even named collector of the tribute which Arabia Petraea paid to the king of kings. I did my work of collection well, and that of payment not at all.

“The Grand Destur of Babylon, in the name of King Moabdar, sent a little satrap here to have me strangled. This man arrived with his troop ; I was well-informed about everything and had strangled in his presence the four persons he had brought with him to pull the cord tight : after which I asked him how much he was getting for strangling me. He said his fees might amount to three hundred pieces of gold. I let him see clearly that he would have more to gain with me, and made him under-brigand : to-day he is one of my best officers and one of the richest. Believe me, you will do as well as he has. The robbing season has never been better since Moabdar was killed and confusion reigns in Babylon.”

“Moabdar killed !” exclaimed Zadig. “And what has become of Queen Astarte ?”

“I don’t know at all,” answered Arbogad. “All I know is that Moabdar went mad and was killed, that Babylon is one big nest of cut-throats, that the empire is laid waste, that there are still some nice little jobs to pull off, and that so far as I am concerned I have already done some excellent ones.”

“But the queen . . . !” repeated Zadig. “I beg you . . . do you know nothing of the queen’s fate ?”

“I have heard speak of a Prince of Hyrcania,” answered the other. “She’s probably become one of his concubines . . . if she wasn’t killed in the general riot. But I’m more interested in loot than news. In the course of my raids I’ve taken plenty of women, but I haven’t kept one : I sell ‘em dear when they’re pretty without even asking who they are. It’s not their rank I buy. An ugly queen wouldn’t find a bidder. Maybe I sold Queen Astarte, maybe she’s dead, but it’s all the same to me, and I don’t think you ought to worry about it any more than I do.” Talking like this, he drank with so much zeal that he confused all his ideas, and Zadig could get no enlightenment.

He remained dumbfounded, overwhelmed, motionless. Arbogad was drinking all the time, telling stories, repeating over and over again that he was the happiest of men, and exhorting Zadig to be as happy as he was. At last, getting drowsy with the fumes of the wine, he went off to enjoy a peaceful sleep. Zadig passed the night in the most violent agitation. "What!" he cried, "the king has gone mad, has been killed! I cannot help pitying him. The empire is destroyed! . . . and this brigand is happy! O fortune! O destiny! A brigand is happy, and the most lovable thing nature ever made has perhaps died an awful death, or lives in a state worse than death! O Astarte! What has become of you?"

As soon as day broke he questioned all the men he came across in the castle, but they were all busy, and no one answered him. During the night they had made fresh conquests and were dividing the spoils. All he could obtain in the tumult and confusion was permission to depart. He took advantage of the permission without delay, plunged deeper than ever in his sorrowful reflections.

He walked along worried and restless, his mind filled with the thought of unhappy Astarte, of the king, of Babylon and of his faithful Cador, of Arbogad the happy brigand, of that capricious woman whom the Babylonians had carried off on the borders of Egypt, of—in short, of all the mishaps and adversities he had experienced.





CHAPTER XVII

THE FISHERMAN



FEW leagues from Arbogad's castle he found himself on the bank of a little river. He was still bewailing his lot and looking on himself as the model of misery. He saw lying on the bank a fisherman who held a net loosely in his listless hand, seeming to let it go while he raised his eyes to the sky.

"I am certainly the most miserable of men," the fisherman was saying. "I was, as everyone acknowledged, the most famous cream-cheese merchant in Babylon, and now I am ruined. I had the prettiest wife a man could have, and she deceived me. I still had a miserable little house, and it was plundered and destroyed. I took refuge in a hut, and now my sole source of livelihood is fishing, and I do not catch any fish. O my net, I will throw thee into the water no more, I will throw myself instead."

As he said these words he stood up and walked towards the water with the bearing of a man who is going to hurl himself into the river and end his life.

"Really!" said Zadig to himself, "so there are other men as unhappy as I am." An eager desire to save the fisherman's life came promptly with this reflection. Zadig ran to him, stopped him and questioned him gently and consolingly. It is claimed that a man is less

miserable when he shares his misery with someone else, but according to Zarathustra this is due not to the man's ingenuity but to his need. When one is sad one feels drawn to an unhappy man as to a fellow-creature. The joy of a happy man would be an insult, but two unhappy men are like two young trees which, leaning on each other, brace themselves against the storm.

“Why do you yield to your misfortunes?” Zadig asked the fisherman.

“Because,” replied the fisherman, “I see nothing else to do. I was the most highly respected man in the village of Derback near Babylon, and with my wife's help I made the best cream-cheeses in the whole empire. Queen Astarte and Zadig, the famous minister, adored them. I had supplied them with six hundred cheeses and went to town one day to be paid. On reaching Babylon I learned that Zadig and the queen had disappeared. I ran to the house of my lord Zadig, whom I had never seen, and found there the constables of the Grand Destur: armed with a royal warrant they were faithfully and methodically ransacking the house. I fled to the queen's kitchens; some of the royal cooks told me she was dead, others that she was in prison, others said she had fled, but all assured me I should not be paid for my cheeses. I went with my wife to my lord Orcan, who was one of my customers, and asked his protection in our affliction. He accorded it to my wife, but refused it to me. She was whiter than the cream-cheeses which started my misfortune, and the glory of Tyrian purple was not more lustrous than the roses that lent life to her whiteness. That is what made Orcan keep her and drive me out of his house. I wrote my dear wife the letter of a man in the depths of despair. She said to the bearer—‘Oh, yes, let me see! I know who wrote this; I have heard speak of him. They say he makes excellent cream-cheeses: let him bring me some; my servant will see he is paid.’

“In my distress I thought of applying to the courts of justice. I had six ounces of gold left: of these I had to give two to the man of law I consulted, two to the attorney who undertook my case, two to the chief judge’s secretary. When that was done my case had not yet started, and I had spent more money than my cheeses and my wife were worth. I went back to my village with the intention of selling my house so that I might have my wife. My house was well worth sixty ounces of gold, but people saw I was poor and eager to sell. The first man I approached offered thirty ounces, the second twenty, and the third ten. So deluded was I that I was about to accept when a Prince of Hyrcania came to Babylon, and laid waste everything on his road. My house was first sacked and then burned.

“Having thus lost my money, my wife and my house, I retired to this country where you see me now. I have tried to live by plying the fisherman’s trade. The fish, like the men, laugh at me. I catch nothing, and am dying of hunger, and if it were not for you, august consoler, I was going to die in the river.”

The fisherman did not tell this tale all at once, for at every moment Zadig, overcome with emotion, interrupted him with—“What! you know nothing of the queen’s fate?”

“No, my lord,” replied the fisherman, “I know nothing of the queen’s fate, but I do know that neither she nor Zadig paid for my cream-cheeses, that my wife has been filched from me, and that I am in despair.”

“I trust you will not lose all your money,” said Zadig. “I have heard speak of this Zadig; he is an honest man, and if he returns to Babylon (as I hope he will) he will give you more than he owes you. As regards your wife, who is not so honest, I counsel you not to try to get her back. Listen to me. Go to Babylon. I shall be there before you because I am on horseback and you are on foot. Go to see the illustrious

Cador, tell him you have met his friend. Await me at his house. Go along, perhaps you will not be unhappy always.

“All powerful Ormuzd!” he continued, “you use me to console this man. Who will you use to console me?”

Speaking thus he gave the fisherman half of all the money he had brought from Arabia, and the fisherman, overcome with delight, kissed the feet of Cador’s friend. “You are my angel deliverer!” he cried.

Zadig, however, went on asking for news, and wept.

“But, lord,” said the fisherman, “are you also unfortunate, you who do good?”

“A hundred times more unfortunate than you,” answered Zadig.

“But how can it be,” pursued the good man, “that he who gives is more to be pitied than he who receives?”

“The reason is that your greatest misfortune was poverty, whereas mine is a trouble of the heart,” replied Zadig.

“Did Orcan by chance steal your wife?” asked the fisherman.

This question reminded Zadig of all his adventures. He recited the list of his misfortunes, starting with the queen’s bitch right up to his meeting with the brigand Arbogad. “Ah!” he said to the fisherman, “Orcan deserves to be punished, but usually it is just those people who are the favourites of fate. At all events, go to my lord Cador’s house and wait for me there.”

They parted, the fisherman thanking his fate as he walked, and Zadig cursing his as he ran.





CHAPTER XVIII

THE BASILISK

N reaching a beautiful meadow, Zadig saw a number of women looking for something with much diligence. He took the liberty of approaching one of them and asked if he might have the honour of helping them in their search.

“Do nothing of the sort!” answered the Syrian girl. “What we seek may be touched only by women.”

“That is very strange,” said Zadig. “Dare I ask what it is that only women may touch?”

“We seek a basilisk,” she replied.

“A basilisk, Madam? And why do you seek a basilisk, if you please?”

“It is for Ogul, our lord and master, whose castle you see on the river bank at the edge of this meadow. We are his very humble slaves. My lord Ogul is sick, and his doctor has ordered him to eat a basilisk cooked in rose-water. As this animal is very rare and lets itself be captured only by women, my lord Ogul has promised to choose for his well-beloved wife the girl who brings him a basilisk. Let me go on looking, please; you can see what it would cost me if I were forestalled by my companions.”

Zadig left the Syrian girl and her companions to look for their basilisk and continued his walk across the

meadow. When he reached the bank of a little stream, he saw lying on the grass another lady who was looking for nothing. She appeared to be of majestic stature, but her face was covered with a veil. She was leaning towards the stream and uttering deep sighs. In her hand she held a little stick with which she was tracing some characters on the fine sand between the grass and the water. Zadig was curious to see what she was writing. He saw the letter Z, then an A: he was surprised: then a D; he started. Never was astonishment greater than his when he saw the last two letters of his own name. For some time he stood motionless. At last, breaking the silence in a halting voice—"Generous lady," he stammered, "forgive a stranger, an unfortunate, daring to ask by what odd chance I find the name of ZADIG traced here by your divine hand."

At this voice, at these words, the lady lifted her veil with trembling hands, looked at Zadig, uttered a cry of affection, surprise and joy, and, succumbing to the variety of emotions that assailed her soul all at once, fell swooning in his arms.

It was Astarte herself, the Queen of Babylon, the woman Zadig adored and whom he reproached himself with adoring. It was the woman for whose fate he had so wept and feared. For a moment he lost the use of his faculties. Then looking at Astarte's eyes, which opened again languidly with a look of mingled love and confusion—"Can it be true?" he cried. "Immortal powers that preside over the destinies of frail mortals, do you give me back Astarte? When, where, in what plight do I see her once more!" He threw himself on his knees before her and fell on his face in the dust at her feet. The Queen of Babylon lifted his head and made him sit beside her on the river bank; many times did she wipe from her eyes the tears which would not stop flowing. Twenty times did she start and start again telling him things which her lamentations interrupted.

She questioned him on the chance which had reunited them, and suddenly forestalled his answers with other questions. She broached the recital of her own misadventures and wanted to hear all about Zadig's. When at last both had calmed the tumult in their souls somewhat, Zadig related briefly by what accident he happened to be in this meadow.

“But, unfortunate and honoured queen,” he asked, “how is it I find you in this lovely spot clad as a slave and in the company of other slave-women who seek a basilisk to have it cooked in rose-water by doctor's orders ? ”

“While they are looking for the basilisk,” said beautiful Astarte, “I will tell you all I have suffered and all the things I forgive heaven for now that I see you again. You know that the king my husband thought very badly of you for being the most lovable of men. It was for this reason that he decided one night to have you strangled and me poisoned. You know how heaven allowed my little dwarf to warn me of his sublime majesty's order. Hardly had faithful Cador forced you to obey me and depart, than he dared enter my rooms in the middle of the night by a secret door. He carried me off to the temple of Ormuzd, where his brother the Magus shut me up in a huge statue of which the foot touched the temple's foundations, and the head the dome. I was as it were buried, but the Magus looked after me, and I lacked nothing I needed.

“Meanwhile, his majesty's apothecary went at daybreak to my room with a potion of henbane, opium, hemlock, black hellebore and aconite, while another officer went to your rooms with a blue silk cord. They found no one. The better to deceive the king, Cador pretended to betray us : he said you had taken the road to India, and I the road to Memphis. Couriers were sent out after us both.

“The couriers looking for me did not know me by sight. Barely ever had I shown my face to anyone but



you, in my husband's presence and by his order. They pursued me on a picture of me made specially for the occasion. A woman of my height, who had greater charms maybe, was noticed by them near the Egyptian frontier. She was wandering about, distraught. They had no doubts as to this being the Queen of Babylon, and brought her to Moabdar. At first their mistake sent the king into a violent rage, but after looking at this woman more closely he discovered she was very beautiful, and was consoled. Her name was Missouf. I have learned since that in Egyptian this name signifies *the capricious beauty*. And indeed she was capricious, but she had as much cunning as caprice. She pleased Moabdar and mastered him to the point of having herself proclaimed his wife. Then her nature displayed itself in its entirety. She gave herself up fearlessly to all the mad whims of her imagination. She had a fancy to force the Chief of the Magi, who was old and gouty, to dance before her, and when he refused she persecuted him with the utmost fury. She ordered her master-of-the-horse to make her a jam tart. The master-of-the-horse pleaded in vain that he was no pastrycook ; he had to make the tart, and then Missouf had him dismissed because the tart was burned. She gave the post of master-of-the-horse to her dwarf, and that of chancellor to a page. Everyone missed me.

“ The king, who was an honourable enough man up to the time he wished to poison me and strangle you, seemed to have drowned his qualities in the prodigious love he had for the capricious beauty. He came to the temple on the great day of the sacred fire. I heard him pray to the gods for Missouf at the feet of the very statue where I was imprisoned. I raised my voice—‘ The gods, I cried, ‘ refuse the prayers of a king turned tyrant, who wanted to have his sensible wife killed that he might marry a wild scatter-brain.’ ”

“ Moabdar was so dumbfounded by these words that his mind was unhinged. The oracle I had delivered,

coupled with Missouf's tyranny, made him lose his reason. In a few days he was quite mad.

"His madness, which seemed a punishment from heaven, was the signal for revolution. The people rose in revolt and ran to arms. Babylon, so long immersed in emasculate indolence, became the theatre of terrible civil war. I was taken out of my statue and put at the head of one faction. Cador rushed to Memphis to bring you back to Babylon. The Prince of Hyrcania, learning the disastrous news, returned with his army to make a third faction in Chaldea. He attacked the king, who fled before him with his hare-brained Egyptian woman. Moabdar died transpierced. Missouf fell into the hands of the conqueror. My misfortune was to be captured by a party of Hyrcanians and led before the prince at precisely the same moment as Missouf. You will be flattered doubtless to learn that the prince thought me more beautiful than the Egyptian, but you will be sorry to learn that he marked me for his harem. He told me very determinedly that he would come to fetch me when he had completed a military expedition he was about to undertake. You can judge of my sorrow. My bonds with Moabdar being broken, I could belong to Zadig, and I fell into this barbarian's chains. I answered him with the pride my rank and feelings gave me. I had always heard say that heaven gave persons of my rank a characteristic majesty which with a word and a glance could drive into the humbleness of deepest respect those who were rash enough to stray beyond it. I spoke as a queen, but I was treated like a chamber-maid. The Hyrcanian, without even condescending to speak to me, told his black eunuch I was a saucy wench, but he thought me pretty. He ordered him to look after me and put me on the regime of the favourites, so as to refresh my complexion and make me more worthy of his favours when it should be convenient for him to honour me with them. I told him I should kill myself. He laughed, and replied

that people did not kill themselves, that he was accustomed to all these little affectations ; whereupon he left me, much as a man who has just put a new parrot in his menagerie. What a state of affairs for the first queen in the world and, I will add, for a heart which belonged to Zadig ! ”

At these words Zadig fell at her knees and bathed them with tears. Tenderly did Astarte lift him up and continue her story.

“ I found myself,” she went on, “ a barbarian’s chattel and the rival of a madwoman with whom I was shut up. She told me the story of her adventure in Egypt. I judged from the description she gave of you, from the time, the dromedary on which you were mounted, from all the details in short, that it was Zadig who had fought for her. I had no doubts as to your being at Memphis, and I resolved to get away there. ‘ Beautiful Missouf,’ I said to her, ‘ you are much nicer than I am, you will entertain the Prince of Hyrcania much better than I shall, help me to escape. You will reign alone, and you will make me happy while you relieve yourself of a rival.’ Missouf devised with me my plans of escape. I left secretly, therefore, with an Egyptian slave-woman.

“ I was already near Arabia when a famous brigand named Arbogad carried me off and sold me to some merchants, who brought me to this castle where lives my lord Ogul. He bought me without knowing who I was. He is a voluptuary who thinks of nothing but good living, and believes God placed him in the world to eat. He is enormously fat and hence is nearly always at the point of suffocation. His doctor has little influence with him when his digestion is in order, but governs him like a despot when he has overeaten himself. This doctor has persuaded him that a basilisk cooked in rose-water will cure him. Lord Ogul has promised his hand to whichever of his slaves brings him a basilisk. As you can see, I let them flock to merit this honour, and I have never

had less desire to find the basilisk than since heaven has let me see you again."

Astarte and Zadig then confided to each other all that long-repressed emotion, misfortune and love could inspire in the noblest and most passionate hearts ; and the genii who rule love carried their words right to the realms of Venus.

The women returned to O gul's castle without having found anything. Zadig was presented to O gul, and spoke to him in these terms :—“ May immortal health descend from heaven to watch over your days ! I am a doctor, and having heard of your illness have hastened to your side, bringing you a basilisk cooked in rose-water. Not that I claim the right to be your wife. All I ask is the freedom of a young Babylonian slave whom you have had only a few days, and should I not be so fortunate as to cure the great lord O gul, I consent to slavery in her stead.”

The offer was accepted, and Astarte left for Babylon with Zadig's servant, having promised to send a courier at once to let him know all that happened. Their farewells were as tender as had been their meeting. The moment of reunion and the moment of parting are the two greatest times in life, as the great book of Zend says. Zadig loved the queen as much as he swore, and the queen loved Zadig more than she said.

While Astarte was on the way to Babylon, Zadig had a talk with O gul. “ My lord,” he said, “ my basilisk must not be eaten, all its virtues must enter your system by the pores of your skin. I have put it in a little leather bag, which has been well-blown out and covered with a fine skin. You must hit this bag with all your strength, and I will send it back to you several times. A few days of this treatment will show you the power of my art.”

On the first day O gul was quite out of breath and thought he would have died of weariness. On the second he was less tired and slept better. In a week he had re-

covered all his health, strength and agility and the gaiety of his most blooming years.

"You have played at ball and kept sober," Zadig told him. "Learn that there is no such thing as a basilisk, that with temperance and exercise one is always well. The art of making intemperance and health dwell together is as chimerical as the philosopher's stone, judicial astrology, and the theology of the Magi."

Ogul's chief doctor, seeing how dangerous this man was to the art of medicine, joined forces with the apothecary of the household to send Zadig to look for basilisks in the next world. Thus, having always been punished for doing good, he was about to perish for curing a lordly glutton. He was invited to an excellent dinner. He was to be poisoned during the second course, but during the first he received a messenger from beautiful Astarte. He left the table and the castle.

When one is loved by a beautiful woman, says the great Zarathustra, one always finds a way out of one's trouble in this world.





CHAPTER XIX

THE TOURNAMENTS

THE queen had been received in Babylon with the delight people always have in a beautiful princess now has been unfortunate. The city seemed quite calm. The Prince of Hyrcania had been killed in a battle. The Babylonian victors declared that Astarte should marry the man they chose as king. They did not wish the first place in the world to be dependent on intrigues and cabals, and they therefore swore to recognise as king the wisest and bravest man. A great arena surrounded by magnificently decorated galleries was built a few leagues from the city. The combatants had to present themselves in full armour. Behind the galleries each had a separate apartment, where he was to remain unseen and unknown. Each combatant had to ride against four lances. Those that were fortunate enough to beat four knights would fight afterwards against each other, so that he who finally remained master of the field would be proclaimed winner of the games. The winner had to return four days later with the same arms, and solve riddles propounded by the Magi. If he did not solve the riddles he would not be king, and it would be necessary to joust again until a man was found to win in both contests ; for the people insisted on having the bravest man and the wisest. During this time the queen was to be closely guarded, and she could

be present at the games only if she were veiled. She was forbidden to speak to any claimant, so that there might be neither favour nor injustice.

This was the news Astarte made known to her lover, in the hope that for her sake he would show greater courage and wit than anybody else.

Zadig reached the banks of the Euphrates on the eve of the great day. He wrote down his emblem with those of the other combatants, concealing his name and face as the law commanded, and went to rest himself in the apartment that fate had allotted him. His friend Cador, who had returned to Babylon after searching Egypt for him in vain, arranged for a complete suit of armour from the queen to be sent to his dressing-room. He had sent from her also the most beautiful horse in Persia. Zadig recognised that these presents were from Astarte : his courage and love gathered new hope and strength.

On the morrow, when the queen was seated under her canopy studded with precious stones, and the galleries were crowded with every lady of every class in Babylon, the combatants appeared in the arena. Each placed his armorial shield at the feet of the Grand Magus. The drawing was by lot, and Zadig was drawn last.

The first to advance was a very rich lord named Itobad, a very vain fellow, of little courage, very clumsy and witless. His servants had persuaded him that a man like him ought to be king, and he had replied—"A man like me is born to rule!" Thus had they armed him from head to foot. He wore golden armour enamelled green, a green plume, a lance decorated with green ribbons. It was obvious at once from the way Itobad managed his horse that it was not for "a man like him" heaven was reserving the sceptre of Babylon. The first knight who rode against him dismounted him ; the second knocked him backwards on his horse's crupper, his legs in the air and his arms outstretched. Itobad recovered his seat, but with so bad a grace that everyone in the galleries

started laughing. A third did not deign to use his lance, but made a pass, seized him by the right leg, and turning him half-round sent him sprawling on the sand. The stewards ran to him laughing, and put him back in the saddle. The fourth combatant took him by the left leg and made him fall on the other side. He was led back to his room amid hooting: there by law he had to pass the night. And as he picked his painful way back he said—“What an adventure for a man like me !”

The other knights did their duty better. Some of them beat two combatants running, others three even. Only Prince Otame beat four. At last Zadig’s turn came. He dismounted four knights one after the other with all the grace in the world. The situation then was—who would win, Otame or Zadig ? The former wore blue and gold armour with a similar plume. Zadig’s arms were white. The blue knight and the white knight were equal favourites with the crowd. The queen prayed with beating heart that white might win.

The two champions made their thrusts and volts with so much agility, each of them gave such good blows with the lance, each was so firm in his seat, that everyone but the queen hoped there would be two kings in Babylon. At last, their horses being tired and their lances broken, Zadig had resort to this artifice: he passed behind the blue prince, sprang on his horse’s crupper, seized the prince by the middle, threw him to the ground, seated himself in the saddle instead, and circled round Otame, who lay stretched on the ground.

“The white knight wins !” cried the whole gallery.

Otame, exasperated, rose and drew his sword. Zadig leapt from his horse with his sabre in his hand. There they were, both on foot, engaging in a new battle in which strength and skill triumphed alternately. The plumes on their casques, the studs on their armlets, the links of their armour, bounced far and wide beneath a thousand rapid blows. They strike with the point, with the edge,

right and left, on head and on breast. They draw back, they advance, they measure each other, they lock again, they seize each other, twist themselves round each other like snakes, attack like lions. At last, Zadig has a moment to gather his wits, he stops, feints, thrusts, makes Otame fall, and disarms him.

“White knight,” cries Otame, “’tis you shall rule over Babylon.”

The queen was at the height of joy. The blue knight and the white knight, as well as all the others, were led back to their apartments, as laid down by the law. Mutes attended on them and brought them food. As may be guessed, it was the queen’s little mute who waited on Zadig. Afterwards they were left to sleep till morning, when the victor had to bring his armorial shield to the Grand Magus for comparison, and to make himself known.

Although Zadig was in love he was so tired that he slept. Itobad, who rested near him, slept not at all. He rose during the night, entered Zadig’s room, took Zadig’s white armour and armorial shield, and left his own green armour in its place. When day came he went proudly to the Grand Magus and announced that “a man like him” was the victor. His identity caused some surprise, but he was proclaimed victor while Zadig was still asleep. Astarte was bewildered and returned to Babylon with despair in her heart. The galleries were already almost empty when Zadig awoke. He looked for his arms, and found only the green suit. He was forced to put it on as he had nothing else with him. Taken aback and indignant, he dressed in fury and went forward in this apparel.

All the people left in the gallery and the arena received him with hoots. He was surrounded and insulted to his face. Never did man endure such humiliating mortification. He lost patience, and with blows from his sabre sent flying the rabble which dared abuse him.

But he did not know what action to take. He could not see the queen ; he could not claim the white armour she had sent him—that would have meant compromising her. Thus, while he was plunged in sorrow, he was steeped in fury and uneasiness.

He went for a walk along the banks of the Euphrates, persuaded that his star destined him to be unfortunate despite all his efforts. He ran over all his afflictions in his mind from the adventure of the wife who hated one-eyed men down to that of his armour. "That is what comes of waking too late," he said. "If I had slept less I should be King of Babylon, I should possess Astarte. Knowledge, morality, courage have therefore ever served only to my undoing." A murmur against Providence escaped him at last, and he was tempted to believe that everything was ordered by a cruel destiny which oppressed the good and made green knights to prosper. One of his vexations was that he had to wear the green armour which had called forth so much jeering. A merchant passed. Zadig sold it to him for a song and took from him a robe and a high conical hat. In this apparel he walked along the banks of the Euphrates, filled with despair and secretly reproaching the Providence which persisted in persecuting him.





CHAPTER XX

THE HERMIT

WHILE he was walking along he came across a hermit whose venerable white beard reached to his waist. In his hand he held a book which he was studying intently. Zadig stopped and made a deep bow. The hermit greeted him with a gesture at once so gentle and so dignified that Zadig was curious to talk to him. He asked what book the hermit was reading.

“It is the book of the decrees of fate,” answered the hermit. “Would you like to read some of it?”

He placed the book in Zadig’s hand, and although Zadig was acquainted with several languages he could not decipher one word of the book. This redoubled his curiosity.

“You look very sad,” said the good father.

“I have good reason to be, alas!” replied Zadig.

“If you will allow me to accompany you,” the old man went on, “perhaps I can be useful to you. I have been able sometimes to bring comfort to the souls of the distressed.”

Zadig felt somewhat in awe of the hermit’s appearance, of his beard and his book, and he found in his conversation a high wisdom. The hermit spoke of fate, of justice and ethics, of sovereign good and human frailty,

of virtue and vice, with such live and moving eloquence that Zadig felt drawn to him irresistibly, and begged the old man not to leave him until they were back in Babylon.

“It is I who ask this favour of you,” returned the hermit. “Swear to me by Ormuzd that no matter what I may do you will not leave me for the next few days.”

Zadig swore, and they set off together.

One evening the travellers arrived at a magnificent castle. The hermit asked hospitality for himself and the young man with him. The porter, whom one would have taken for a great lord, let them in with a kind of disdainful good-nature. They were presented to a chief servant who showed them the master’s splendid apartments. They were allowed to sit at the lower end of the table without the lord of the castle even honouring them with a glance, but they were served like the others with daintiness and profusion of food. After the meal they were given a golden bowl, studded with emeralds and rubies, to wash in. They were taken to a beautiful room to sleep, and on the following morning a servant brought them each a piece of gold, after which he sent them on their way.

“The master of the house,” observed Zadig when they were on the road, “seems to be a generous man, although somewhat haughty; his hospitality is indeed liberal.” As he spoke he noticed that a sort of pouch the hermit wore seemed to be bulging, and in it he saw the golden bowl studded with gems which the old gentleman had stolen. At first he did not dare mention it, but he was very surprised.

Towards noon the hermit went to the door of a very small house where dwelt a rich miser, and asked hospitality for a few hours. A badly dressed old servant received him rudely, and bade Zadig and the hermit go into the stable, where they were given a few mouldy olives, some musty bread and stale beer. The hermit ate and drank as contentedly as on the evening before;

then, addressing the old servant, who was watching them both to see they stole nothing and hurrying their departure, gave him the two pieces of gold he had received in the morning, and thanked him for all his attention. "Let me speak to your master, please," he added.

The astonished servant showed the two travellers in. "Noble lord," said the hermit, "I can but offer my very humble thanks for the splendid way you have received us. Deign to accept this golden bowl as a small mark of my gratitude." The miser nearly fell over backwards, but the hermit gave him no time to recover from the shock, and with his young companion left the house as quickly as he could.

"Father," said Zadig, "what is all this I see? You seem quite different from other men. You steal a gold bowl studded with precious stones from a nobleman who receives you magnificently, and you give it to a miser who treats you abominably."

"My son," replied the old man, "that lordly man who receives strangers only out of vanity and to have his wealth admired will become wiser: the miser will learn to be more hospitable. Be not surprised at anything, and follow me."

Zadig did not yet know whether he had to do with the maddest or wisest of men, but the hermit spoke with such authority that, bound moreover by his oath, he could not help following.

They arrived that night at a pleasantly, albeit simply, built house, where there was naught of either prodigality or niggardliness. The master of the house was a philosopher who had withdrawn from the world, and peacefully pursued the study of wisdom and virtue: nevertheless, he never felt dull. It had pleased him to build this retreat, where he gave strangers a handsome but quite unostentatious reception. He led the way himself for his visitors, whom he first left in a comfortable room to rest themselves. Later, he fetched them himself to in-

vite them to a clean, well-ordered meal, during which he spoke discreetly of the recent revolts in Babylon. He seemed to have a sincere attachment for the queen, and wished Zadig had appeared in the arena to fight for the crown. "But men," he added, "do not deserve to have a king like Zadig." At which Zadig blushed and felt his sorrows redouble.

In the course of conversation it was agreed that things in this world did not always accord with the wishes of the wisest men. The hermit maintained that men did not discern the ways of Providence and were wrong to pass judgment on a whole of which they perceived but the smallest part.

They spoke of the passions. "Ah!" said Zadig, "the passions are disastrous things!"

"They are the winds that fill the ship's sails," returned the hermit. "Sometimes they submerge the ship, but without them the ship could not sail. Bile makes a man ill and choleric, but without bile man could not live. Everything here below is dangerous, and everything is necessary."

They spoke of pleasure, and the hermit proved it to be a gift of the gods, "for," said he, "man can give himself neither ideas nor sensations; he receives everything: pleasure and pain come to him as does his being."

Zadig marvelled how a man who had done such mad things could reason so well. At last, after a talk as instructive as it was agreeable, the host led his guests back to their room, thanking heaven for having sent him two such wise and virtuous men. He offered them money in an easy, big-hearted way which could not offend. The hermit refused it and told him he would take his leave then as he counted on leaving for Babylon before day-break. Their parting was affectionate, Zadig especially feeling much esteem and liking for so lovable a man.

When the hermit and he were in their room they spoke at length in praise of their host. At dawn the old man

waked his comrade. "We must be leaving," he said: "but while everyone is still sleeping I wish to leave this man a mark of my affection and regard."

With these words he took a taper and set fire to the house. Zadig was horrified and cried out, wishing to stop his committing such a frightful act. The hermit with dominating authority hurried him away. The house was ablaze. The hermit, who with his companion was already far enough off, watched it burn tranquilly.

"Thanks be to God!" he said. "There is my dear host's house completely destroyed! Happy man!"

At these words Zadig was tempted to burst out laughing and at the same time to upbraid him, to beat him, and to flee. But he did nothing of all that, and still dominated by the hermit's power followed the old man in spite of himself to their last lodging.

It was in the house of a charitable and virtuous widow who had a very accomplished nephew, her sole hope. She did the honours of her house as well as she was able. The following day she told her nephew to accompany the travellers as far as a bridge which, having been broken recently, had become dangerous to pass over. The young man assiduously walked ahead of them. When they were on the bridge, the hermit called to the lad. "Come here," he cried, "I must show my gratitude to your aunt." As he spoke, he seized the boy by the hair and threw him into the river. The child fell, reappeared for a moment on the surface of the water, and was then engulfed in the torrent.

"You monster!" cried Zadig. "You most infamous of men!"

"You promised me to be more patient," interrupted the hermit. "Learn that beneath the ruins of the house to which Providence set fire the master has found immense treasure. Learn that this youth whose neck Providence has wrung would have murdered his aunt in a year's time, and you in two."

"Who told you so, savage?" roared Zadig. "Because you have read this event in the book of the decrees of fate, are you permitted to drown a child who has done you no harm?"

While the Babylonian was speaking he noticed suddenly that the old man's beard had gone, that his face was taking on the features of youth. His hermit's habit disappeared. Four beautiful wings covered a mighty body radiant with light. "O envoy from heaven! O divine angel!" cried Zadig, falling on his face. "Have you come from the empyrean to teach a frail mortal how to submit to the commands of eternity?"

"Men," answered the angel Jesrad, "judge of everything without understanding anything. You of all men most merited enlightenment."

Zadig begged permission to speak. "I lack confidence in my own judgment," he said; "dare I beg you to throw light on one of my misgivings: would it not have been better to have corrected this child and to have brought him into the path of virtue than to drown him?"

"If he had been virtuous and if he had lived," replied Jesrad, "his destiny was to have been murdered himself with the woman he was to marry and the child which was to be born to him."

"What then!" said Zadig, "must there be crimes and misfortunes? and must misfortunes fall on good people?"

"The wicked," answered Jesrad, "are always unhappy: they serve to prove the small number of the just scattered over the face of the earth, and there is no evil of which good is not born."

"But supposing," said Zadig, "there were only good, and no evil?"

"In that case," replied Jesrad, "this earth would be another earth, the concatenation of events would belong to another order of wisdom; and that order, which



You Monster!

would be perfect, can exist only in the eternal abode of the supreme Being, whom evil cannot approach. He has created millions of worlds, no one of which can resemble another. This vast variety is a symbol of the vastness of his power. On the earth there are no two leaves of a tree like to each other, and in the limitless plains of the heavens no two orbs. All you see on the little atom where you have been born had to be, in its appointed place and time, in accordance with the immutable laws of him who embodies everything. Men think that the child who has just perished fell into the water by chance, that by the same chance this house was burned: but there is no such thing as chance; everything is test, or punishment, or reward, or prevision. Remember the fisherman who thought himself the most unfortunate of men. Ormuzd sent you to change his destiny. Frail mortal! cease contending with that which is to be worshipped."

"But . . ." said Zadig.

As he was saying "but," the angel was already soaring towards the tenth sphere. On his knees Zadig offered his worship to Providence, and submitted. From on high the angel called to him—"Go on your way to Babylon."





CHAPTER XXI

THE RIDDLES



ADIG, beside himself and like a man near whom a thunderbolt has fallen, wandered on aimlessly. He entered Babylon on the day when those who had fought in the arena were already gathered in the great hall of the palace to solve the riddles and answer the questions put by the Grand Magus. With the exception of the man in green armour all the knights had arrived. As soon as Zadig appeared in the town the people flocked round him. Their eyes could not see enough of him, their mouths bless him sufficiently, their hearts wish ardently enough that he might be their king. The Envious saw him pass, shuddered and turned away. The people carried him right to the assembly hall. The queen, who was apprised of his arrival, was a prey to a fever of fear and hope. Anxiety consumed her: she could not understand why Zadig was without arms, or how Itobad was wearing the suit of white armour. At sight of Zadig there was a confused murmuring. Everyone was surprised and delighted to see him, but only knights who had fought were allowed to appear at the assembly.

“I have fought as well as anyone else,” he said, “but my arms are borne here by another. While awaiting the honour of proving that what I say is true, I ask permission to come forward to solve the riddles.” The

question was put to the vote: Zadig's reputation for integrity was still so strongly impressed on their minds that they did not hesitate to admit him.

The Grand Magus propounded this question first of all:—What of all things in the world is the longest and the shortest, the quickest and the slowest, the most divisible and the most extended, the most neglected and the most regretted, without which nothing can be done, which destroys everything that is small and gives life to everything that is great?

Itobad had to answer. He replied that a man like him knew nothing of riddles, and that it was enough for him that he had conquered with sturdy thrusts from his lance. Some said that the answer to the riddle was Fortune, others the World, others Light. Zadig said it was Time. "Nothing is longer," he added, "since it is the measure of eternity, nothing is shorter since all our schemes lack it; nothing is slower to him who waits, and nothing passes more quickly for him who is happy; on the one hand it extends right up to infinity, and on the other it may be divided and subdivided right down to infinity; all men disregard it, and all men regret losing it; nothing can be done without it; it condemns to oblivion all that is unworthy of posterity, and makes the great things immortal." The assembly agreed that Zadig was right.

The next question was:—What is the thing one receives without returning thanks for it, which one enjoys without knowing how, which one gives to others when one has had enough of it, and which one loses without noticing it?

Everyone had his say, but Zadig alone guessed it was Life. He solved all the other riddles with equal ease. Itobad continued to say that nothing was simpler and that he could have succeeded as easily had he wished to give himself the trouble. Questions were put on Justice, the Sovereign Good, the Art of Ruling. Zadig's answers

were judged the soundest. "It is a pity," people said, "such a gifted fellow should be so poor a horseman."

"Noble lords," said Zadig, addressing the assembly, "I had the honour of winning in the arena. The white armour belongs to me. Itobad took possession of it while I slept: he evidently thought it would suit him better than the green. I am ready to prove to him, first of all before you, with my gown and sword against all that beautiful white armour he has taken from me, that it was I who had the honour of beating brave Otame."

Itobad accepted the challenge with the greatest assurance in the world. He had no doubts but that with his casque, cuirass and arm-guard he would dispose of a champion in night-cap and dressing-gown. Zadig drew his sword and saluted the queen, who was watching him filled with joy and apprehension. Itobad drew his, and saluted nobody. He advanced on Zadig like a man who had nothing to fear, ready to split his head in two. Zadig parried the blow by opposing what is called the "forte" of his sword to his adversary's "feeble," with result that Itobad's sword snapped. Then Zadig seized his enemy by the body, threw him to the ground and with the point of his sword at a vulnerable spot in Itobad's cuirass, cried to him—"Let yourself be disarmed or I shall kill you!" Itobad, always astonished at the calamities which befell a man like him, let Zadig do as he would, and the latter tranquilly took off his magnificent casque, his splendid cuirass, his beautiful armlets, his bright thigh pieces. These he donned, and then ran to fall at the knees of Astarte. Cador proved easily that the armour belonged to Zadig. He was acknowledged king by consent of all and particularly of Astarte, who tasted after so many adversities the joy of seeing her lover worthy in the world's eyes of being her spouse. Itobad went back to his house to have himself called "my lord." Zadig was king, and was happy. He bore in mind what the angel Jesrad had said. He remembered even the

grain of sand that became a diamond. The queen and he worshipped Providence. Zadig let that capricious beauty Missouf travel. He sent to find the brigand Arbogad, to whom he gave honourable rank in his army, with a promise to raise him to the highest rank if he conducted himself as a real warrior, and to hang him if he pursued the profession of brigand.

Sétoc was called from the depths of Arabia, with his beautiful Almona, to be at the head of the commerce of Babylon. A place was found for Cador, and he was cared for as his services entitled him to be : he was the king's friend, and the king was the only monarch on earth who had a friend. The little mute was not forgotten. The fisherman was given a fine house. Orcan was condemned to pay him a large sum, and to give him back his wife : but the fisherman had grown wise, and he accepted the money only.

Beautiful Sémine could not console herself for having thought that Zadig would be a one-eyed man, nor could Azora stop weeping for having wanted to cut off his nose : The Envious died of rage and shame. The empire enjoyed peace, glory and abundance : it was the finest century on earth, for the government was one of justice and love. Everyone praised Zadig, and Zadig praised heaven.

It is here that the manuscript that has been found of the story of Zadig finishes. It is known that he underwent many other adventures which have been faithfully recorded. The gentlemen who interpret oriental languages are requested to communicate these records, should they happen to come into their hands.



THE WHITE BULL

CHAPTER I

HOW THE PRINCESS AMASIDE ENCOUNTERS A BULL



THE young Princess Amaside, daughter of Amasis, King of Tanis in Egypt, was walking on the road to Pelusium with the ladies of her train. She was plunged in profound grief, and tears rolled down from her beautiful eyes. We know the cause of her sorrow, and how much she feared, by that very sorrow, to displease the King, her father. The aged man Mambrès, former mage and eunuch to the Pharaohs, was by her side, for he very seldom quitted it. He had witnessed her birth, he had brought her up, he had taught her everything permissible to a beautiful Princess to know of the sciences of Egypt. She was as full of feeling, and as gentle, as she was charming, and her susceptibility it was that was costing her so many tears.

The Princess was twenty-four years of age ; Mambrès, the mage, about thirteen hundred. He it was, as we know, who had had that famous dispute with the great Moses, in which victory hung so long in the balance between those two profound philosophers. If Mambrès it was who succumbed, it was only because of the visible

protection of the Heavenly Powers who favoured his rival ; the gods alone could vanquish Mambrès.

Amasis had made him superintendent of his daughter's household, and he acquitted himself in his office with his usual wisdom ; the fair Amaside moved him to pity by her sighs : "O my lover ! my young and cherished lover !" she would cry at moments : "Greatest of conquerors, handsomest and most accomplished of men ! What ! is it nearly seven years since you disappeared from earth ? What God has snatched you from your poor, tender Amaside ? It is not that you are dead ; thereon the learned prophets of Egypt are agreed. But you are dead to me, and I am alone on earth, and earth is a desert. What strange prodigy has seen you abandon your throne and your mistress ? Your throne ? It was the highest in the world, but that is a small matter ; but to abandon me, who adore you ! O my dear N. . . ." She had almost said it.

"Tremble to pronounce that fatal name," said the wise Mambrès, former mage and eunuch to the Pharaohs. "You may perhaps be overheard by one of the ladies of the palace. They are all devoted to you, and all these lovely ladies doubtless make a virtue of serving the exalted passions of beautiful princesses ; but, after all, there may be one found indiscreet, or even, indeed, perfidious. You know that the King, your father, although he loves you, has sworn to cut off your head if ever you pronounce the terrible name so ready to escape you. Weep, but be silent. The law is very hard, but you were not brought up in the wisdom of Egypt without knowing how to rule your tongue. Remember that Harpocrates, one of the greatest of our gods, has ever his finger on his lips."

The beautiful Amaside wept, but said no more.

As she pursued her steps in silence along the border of the Nile, she saw some way off, under a shady grove bathed by the stream, an old woman clad in sombre rags, sitting on a hillock. Near by her she had a she-ass, a

dog and a goat. Facing her was a serpent unlike other serpents, for his eyes were as soft as they were bright ; his expression was noble and invited interest ; his skin glittered with the softest but most brilliant colouring. An enormous fish, half-submerged in the stream, was not the least astonishing member of the company. And on a branch were a raven and a dove. All these creatures seemed to be conversing with some animation.

“ Alas ! ” murmured the princess, “ they all discourse, doubtless, of their loves, and I may not pronounce even the name of mine.”

The old woman held in her hand a light steel chain a hundred spans in length, to which was attached a bull, who was browsing on the green tracts. This bull was white, perfect in form, and sleek of condition and light of build, which is very rare. His horns were of ivory. Never was seen a finer one of his race. That of Pasiphaë, or the bull whose shape Jupiter borrowed for his rape of Europa, could not compare with this superb beast. The charming heifer which embodied Isis would scarce have been worthy of him.

No sooner did he see the princess than he ran towards her with the swiftness of the young Arab steed covering the plains and floods of ancient Saana to draw nigh the satin-skinned jennet of his affections for whom he pricks his ears. The old woman tried to hold him in ; the serpent sought to fright him with its hissing ; the dog ran after him and set its teeth in his beautiful legs ; the she-ass crossed his path, and flung up her heels in his face to make him turn back ; the great fish swam against the Nile, and thrusting itself out of the water, threatened to swallow him ; the goat, seized with fear, stood motionless, while the raven flew round his head, and seemed to endeavour to pick out his eyes. Only the dove followed him with interest, and encouraged him with soft cooings.

So extraordinary a spectacle gave Mambrès serious thought. Meanwhile the white bull, dragging the chain



He ran towards her

and the old woman after him, had already come up with the princess, who was seized with astonishment and fear. He threw himself at her feet, and kissed them, he shed tears, he gazed at her with eyes wherein reigned joy and sorrow indescribably mingled. He dared not bellow, for fear of terrifying the beautiful Amaside ; he could not speak ; and heaven had denied him the gentle notes it accords to some of its creatures ; but his every action was eloquent. The princess was greatly pleased with him. She became aware that a slight amusement may suspend, for a short while, afflictions the most sorrowful.

“ What a delightful animal,” said she ; “ I should like to have him in my stable.”

At these words, the bull bent his knees and kissed the ground.

“ He understands me ! ” cried the princess, “ he shows me that he would willingly be mine ! Ah, divine mage, divine eunuch, grant me this consolation, buy me this beautiful cherubim (1) ! Pay his price to the old woman, to whom he doubtless belongs. I wish him to be mine—do not refuse me this innocent joy and comfort ! ”

All the ladies of the palace joined their importunities to those of the princess. Mambrès did not show himself insensible, but went to speak with the old woman.





CHAPTER II *HOW THE WISE MAMBRÈS, FORMERLY SORCERER TO THE PHARAOHS, RECOGNISED THE OLD WOMAN, AND HOW HE WAS RECOGNISED BY HER*

“ **M**ADAME,” said he to her, “ you are aware that young women, and particularly princesses, have need of amusement. The King’s daughter has set her heart on your bull ; I beg you to sell him to us, and you shall be paid cash down.”

“ My lord,” replied the old woman, “ this precious beast is none of mine. I am appointed, I and all the animals you see, to keep him with care, to watch over all his ways, and render an account of them. God preserve me from ever wishing to sell this priceless beast.”

Mambrès, on hearing her, felt a certain confused light break upon him which he could not as yet distinguish. He looked at the old woman in the grey cloak with a closer attention.

“ Most worthy lady,” said he, “ either I am mistaken or I have seen you before.”

“ I make no mistake on my part,” replied the old woman ; “ I saw you, my lord, some seven hundred years ago, on a voyage I made from Syria to Egypt, some months after the destruction of Troy, when Hiram reigned in Tyre, and Nephel Keres over ancient Egypt.”

"Ah, Madame," said the aged man, "you are the august Witch of Endor."

"And you, my lord," said the Witch, embracing him, "are the great Mambrès of Egypt."

"O meeting unlooked for! O memorable day! O eternal decrees!" cried Mambrès. "It is assuredly not without the ordering of Universal Providence that we meet each other again on this green tract beside the Nile, near the proud city of Tanis. And is it indeed you, Madame, so famous on the shores of your little river of Jordan, the first person in the world for calling up the shades of the departed?"

"And is it indeed you, my lord, so famous for changing rods into serpents, day into dark, and rivers into blood?"

"Yes, Madame, but my great age has somewhat weakened my power and my illumination. I cannot divine whence comes this beautiful white bull of yours, nor what these animals who guard him along with you."

The old woman collected her thoughts, raised her eyes to heaven and replied in these words:

"My dear Mambrès, we are of the same profession; but I am expressly forbidden to tell you what this bull may be. I can satisfy you as to the other animals. You will easily recognise them by their characteristic signs. This is the serpent who persuaded Eve to eat the apple, and make her husband eat of it. This is the ass who spoke to Balaam, your contemporary, in the narrow way. The fish, whose head is still out of water, is the one who swallowed Jonah some years ago. This is the dog that followed the angel Raphael and the young Tobias on their journey to Rages in Media, in the days of the great Salmanazar. Here is the scapegoat who expiates the sins of a nation. The raven and the dove were in the Ark with Noah, during that great event, that universal catastrophe, of which nearly all the earth is still in ignor-

ance ! And now you know. But, as to this bull, you will learn nothing."

Mambrès heard her with respect. Then he said : " Illustrious Pythoness, the Eternal One reveals that which he will, and to whom he will. All these beasts who are committed, with you, to the guardianship of the white bull, are only known to your generous and agreeable nation, which is itself unknown to the greater part of mankind. The marvels which you and yours, and I and mine, have worked, will one day prove subject of doubt and scandal to men of pretended wisdom. Happily they will find credence among the truly wise (2), who shall submit themselves to the seers in a small quarter of the globe, and that is all we can ask."

As he pronounced these words the princess pulled him by the sleeve, and said to him :

" Mambrès, are you not going to buy me my bull ? "

The mage, lost in deep thought, replied not, and Amaside shed tears.

She then turned to the old woman and addressed her : " My good woman, I beg of you by all you hold most dear, by your father, by your mother, by your nurse, all of whom still live I have no doubt, to sell me not only your bull, but also your dove, which seems so fond of him. For the other animals, I have no wish ; but I shall certainly have an attack of the vapours if you do not sell me this charming white bull which will be the joy of my life."

The old woman kissed, with all respect, the fringe of her garment of gauze, and replied to her :

" Princess, my bull is not for sale—your illustrious mage now knows that. All I can do to serve your wish is to bring him to graze daily near your palace, and you may caress him, and give him biscuits, and do with him what you will. But he must be continually beneath the gaze of all these animals, my companions, who are charged to watch over him. If he makes no attempt to escape,

they will do him no hurt ; but if he tries once more to break his chain, as he did when he saw you, woe betide him ! I will not answer for his life ! This great fish you see there will infallibly swallow him up, and keep him more than three days in his belly ; or else this serpent, which you have perchance thought gentle and amiable enough, may pierce him with its mortal fangs."

The white bull, which understood to a wonder all that was said by the old woman, but could say nothing, accepted these propositions with a submissive air. He lay down at her feet, lowed softly, and looking tenderly at Amaside seemed to say to her : "Come and see me sometimes at grass." The serpent then found words, and spoke :

"Princess, I counsel you to do blindly what Miss Endor has just told you."

The ass also had her word, and spoke in the same sense. Amaside was grieved that the serpent and the ass should speak so well, and a beautiful bull be so filled with noble and tender sentiments and yet be unable to express them. Alas ! she told herself, nothing is commoner at court, where one may daily mark handsome young gentlemen with no conversation, and ill-dowered persons who speak with all assurance.

"This serpent," said Mambrès, "is not ill-dowered : make no mistake ; he is perhaps, of all, the personage to be most considered."

Day declined, and the princess was obliged to return, after promising to come again the next day at the same hour. The ladies of the palace were in amaze, and understood nothing of all they had seen and heard. Mambrès pursued his reflections. The Princess, bethinking herself that she had heard the serpent address the old woman as Miss, concluded rather hastily that she was a virgin, and sensible of a certain affliction in being so ; a respectable sentiment which she herself hid with the same scrupulousness as she did the name of her lover.



CHAPTER III *HOW THE FAIR AMASIDE HAD A PRIVATE TALK WITH A HANDSOME SERPENT*

ITHE lovely princess enjoined secrecy to her ladies as to what they had seen. They all promised it, and indeed kept it for a whole day. Amaside, as may be believed, slept little that night. An inexplicable charm recalled unceasingly the image of her beautiful bull. As soon as she was free to speak with Mambrès, the sage, she said to him :

“ O sage ! This animal is turning my head.”

“ He runs much in mine,” said Mambrès. “ I clearly perceive that this cherubim is something far above his kind. I see that there is a great mystery here, and fear some fatal event. Your father, Amasis, is violent and full of suspicion, and the whole affair demands the most prudent conduct on your part.”

“ Ah ! ” said the princess, “ my curiosity is too much for my prudence. It is the only passion which can contend in my heart with that which consumes me for the lover I have lost. Why am I not to know what this white bull is, which raises such trouble in my breast ? ”

“ Madame,” replied Mambrès, “ I have already confessed to you that my science diminishes as my years advance ; but, unless I am greatly mistaken, the serpent is possessed of what you are so anxious to know.

He has understanding: he expresses himself well; he has been long accustomed to interpose in [ladies' affairs.]

“Ah!” said Amaside, “no doubt he is that beautiful Serpent of Egypt, who, holding his tail in his mouth, is the symbol of eternity, who lightens the world when he opens his eyes, and darkens it when he closes them?”

“No, Madame.”

“Then he is the Serpent of *Æsculapius*?”

“Still less is he that.”

“Then Jupiter, perhaps, under the form of a serpent?”

“Not at all.”

“Ah! I know now. It is your rod that you changed into a serpent.”

“No, Madame, I tell you No. Though all these are of the same family. This particular one has a great reputation in his own country, and there he passes for the most able serpent ever seen. Address yourself to him. At the same time I warn you that it is a very dangerous thing to do. Were I in your place, I would have nothing to say to bull, ass, serpent, fish, dog, goat, raven or dove. But your passion is too strong for you; I can only be sorry for it, and tremble.”

The Princess besought him to procure her an interview with the serpent. Mambrès, who was kind, consented, and, still reflecting profoundly, went in search of the Witch. He made known to her the Princess's whim, and that so adroitly that he persuaded her.

The old woman said that it was for Amaside to command, that the serpent had great experience of society; that he was very polite to ladies; that he asked no better than to oblige, and that he would keep the appointment.

The old mage returned and brought the welcome news to the princess; but he was still fearful of misfortune and pondered deeply as before.

“ You wish to speak with the serpent, Madame ; it shall be as your Highness pleases. But remember that you must use much flattery, for every animal is imbued with self-love, and he beyond all. They say even that he was once on a time turned out of a most delectable spot on account of his excessive pride.”

“ I have never heard so,” replied the Princess.

“ I believe it to have been the case,” resumed the old man. And he acquainted her with all the tales which were current about this famous serpent. “ But, Madame, whatever of remark may have happened to him, you will only extort it from him by flattery. In a neighbouring country he is supposed once to have done womankind a sorry turn ; it is but just that in his turn he should be deceived by a woman.”

“ I will do my best,” said the Princess.

So she went forth with the ladies of the palace and the good Mage-Eunuch. The old woman was letting the white bull browse on a long chain. Mambrès left Amaside to herself, and went to converse with the Witch. The first lady-in-waiting conversed with the ass, and the other maids of honour amused themselves with the goat, the dog, the raven and the dove. The big fish, who frightened everybody, plunged back into the Nile by the old woman’s orders.

The serpent preceded Amaside’s steps and led her to the grove, where they had the following conversation :

The Serpent

“ You cannot imagine, Madame, how greatly I am flattered by the honour your Highness consents to do me.”

The Princess

“ Sir, your great repute, your distinction of countenance, your brilliant eyes, have easily persuaded me to seek this interview. Common talk tells us (if it may be believed)

that you were once a great Personage in the Heavens above."

The Serpent

"It is true, Madame, that I had a distinguished enough position there. I am supposed to be a disgraced favourite—a story that was first current in the Indies. The Brahmins were the first to publish a long history of my adventures (3). I do not doubt but that some of the Northern poets (4) will one day make an epic poem of them, and a queer one, for in truth that is all they could make of them. But I am not so far fallen from my high estate but that I still hold a very considerable domain on this globe. I might almost say that the whole earth belongs to me."

The Princess

"I well believe it, Sir, for they say that you have the power of persuading to all you wish, and to please all is to reign."

The Serpent

"I am sensible, Madame, when I see and hear you, that you have over me that empire which I am supposed to exercise over the souls of others."

The Princess

"I feel convinced that you were born to vanquish. They say that you have overcome many ladies, and that you began with our common mother—whose name I have forgotten."

The Serpent

"They do me wrong. I gave her the best possible advice. She honoured me with her confidence. My advice was that she and her husband should eat their fill of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. I thought thereby to please the Master of things. A tree so needful to the human race did not appear to me to be planted

for nothing. Did the Master wish to be served by the ignorant and the idiot ? Was not understanding meant to be enlightened, to be perfected ? Must not good and evil be known, that they may be done and avoided ? Certainly I should have been thanked."

The Princess

" Nevertheless, they say that you suffered for it. It seems to be since then that so many ministers have been punished for giving good advice, and so many true savants and great geniuses have been persecuted for writing things useful to mankind."

The Serpent

" It must be my enemies, Madame, who have told you those tales. They proclaim that I am in ill odour at court. A proof that I have great credit there is that they themselves avow that I was of the Council when it was question of proving the goodman Job ; and that I was called in again when it was resolved to deceive a certain petty King named Achab (5) ; it was I alone who was given the commission."

The Princess

" Oh, sir, I cannot think that you were made to deceive ! But since you still belong to the Ministry, may I ask a favour ? I hope that so amiable a nobleman will not refuse it me."

The Serpent

" Madame, your prayer is law. What is your command ? "

The Princess

" I conjure you to tell me what this beautiful white bull may be, which raises in my breast a feeling I cannot

understand, which melts my heart, and causes me fear. I am told that would you deign, you could instruct me."

The Serpent

"Madame, curiosity is necessary to human nature, and above all to your amiable sex; without it, all would crouch in ignoble ignorance. I have always satisfied ladies' curiosity as far as I was able. I am accused of showing this complacence merely to annoy the Master of things, but I swear to you that my only purpose was to oblige you; but, no doubt, the old woman has warned you that there is danger for you in the revelation of this secret?"

The Princess

"Ah! that is what makes me so very curious!"

The Serpent

"There I recognise all the pretty ladies to whom I have lent help."

The Princess

"If you have any feeling, if every being ought to help another, if you have any pity for an unfortunate lady, do not refuse!"

The Serpent

"You rend my heart—it must be done to please you. But do not interrupt."

The Princess

"That I promise."

The Serpent

"There was a young King, handsome as a picture, amorous, beloved . . .

The Princess

“A young King. Handsome as a picture—amorous—beloved ! By whom ? Who was he ? How old was he ? What became of him ? Where is he ? Where is his kingdom ? What was his name ? ”

The Serpent

“Are you not interrupting me, and when I had only just begun ? Be careful ! If you have no more command of yourself than that, you are lost.”

The Princess

“Ah ! your pardon, Sir. I will not be so indiscreet again.”

The Serpent

“This great King, the most amiable and the most valorous of mankind, victorious wherever he carried his arms, often dreamed when he slept ; and when he forgot his dreams he expected his wise men to remember them, and that they should tell him what he had dreamt ; otherwise he would have them all hanged, for nothing could be juster. Well, it is getting on for seven years since he dreamed a beautiful dream which he could not remember on waking ; and a young Jew of much experience, having explained his dream to him, this amiable monarch was suddenly changed into a bull (6) ; for . . .”

The Princess

“Ah ! it is my dear Nebu . . .”

She could not finish—she fell senseless. Mambrès, who heard her from far off, saw her fall, and believed her dead.



CHAPTER IV *HOW IT WAS PROPOSED TO SACRIFICE THE BULL, AND EXORCISE THE PRINCESS*

MAMBRÈS ran to her, weeping. The Serpent was affected ; he could not weep, but he hissed in doleful wise ; and he exclaimed “She is dead.” The ass repeated “She is dead.” The raven took it up, and all the other animals seemed seized with sorrow, excepting Jonah’s fish, who was always pitiless. The first lady-in-waiting, and the other ladies of the palace, came up, and tore their hair. The White Bull, which was browsing in the distance, and heard their outcry, ran to the wood, pulling the old woman after him, and bellowed until the echoes resounded. In vain did all the ladies sprinkle the swooning Amaside from phials of rose-water, of carnation, myrtle, benzoin, balm of Mecca, cinnamon, aromatic amomum, clove, musk and ambergris ; she gave no sign of life ; but no sooner was she conscious that the White Bull was at her side than she came to herself again, fresher, more beautiful, and more animated than ever. She bestowed a hundred kisses on the charming beast, which lowered its head and languished on her alabaster bosom. She called him “my wonder, my King, my heart, my life.” Her arms of ivory were round his snow-white neck. The straw less firmly clings to the

amber, the vine to the elm, the ivy to the oak. The soft murmur of her sighs was audible, and her eyes were seen to sparkle with a tender flame, or to dim with the precious tears which love can evoke.

Amaside's lady-in-waiting and the maids of honour were lost in surprise, as one may judge. As soon as they were returned to the palace, they all related this strange adventure to their lovers, and each with different details, which increased its singularity, and always add variety to any history.

When Amasis, King of Tanis, was made aware of all this, righteous anger filled his royal breast. Such was the wrath of Minos when he learned that his daughter, Pasiphæ, was lavishing her favours on the father of the Minotaur, such the tremor that Juno knew when she beheld Jupiter, her spouse, caress the white cow Isis, daughter of Inachus the river-god. Amasis ordered Amaside to be confined to her chamber, and set a guard of black eunuchs over the door: then he summoned his privy-council.

Mambrès, the great mage, presided over it: but he no longer possessed the credit that once he did. All the Ministers of State concluded that the White Bull was a wizard. The case was quite otherwise—he was bewitched. But at Court they are always mistaken in these delicate matters.

They decided by a plurality of votes that the Princess must be exorcised, and the White Bull and the old woman sacrificed.

Mambrès was unwilling to contradict the opinion of the King and Council. He had the exclusive right of exorcism, and he saw that he could defer it on a very plausible pretext. The God Apis had just died at Memphis. A bull who is a God dies like any other. It was unlawful to exorcise anybody in Egypt until another bull had been found to replace the defunct.

It was accordingly decreed in Council that it should

stand over until the nomination of the new God at Memphis.

Mambrès, the good old man, was sensible of the peril run by his beloved Princess ; he knew who was her lover, and what. The syllables Ne-bu which had escaped her had revealed the whole mystery to this wise ancient.

The overlordship of Memphis belonged in those days to the Babylonians. They preserved this remains of former conquests made under the greatest King in the world, whose mortal enemy Amasis was. Mambrès had need of all his sagacity to guide himself aright through so many difficulties. If King Amasis discovered his daughter's lover, she was as good as dead : that he had sworn. The great King, so young and so handsome, who had captured her heart, had dethroned her father, who had only recovered his Kingdom of Tanis something less than seven years earlier, when no one could tell what had become of the worshipful Monarch, the Conqueror and the idol of all nations, the tender and generous lover of the charming Amaside. But, by sacrificing the Bull, they would infallibly kill the fair Amaside with grief.

What was Mambrès to do ? Circumstances bristled with difficulties. He went to see his dear nursling as soon as he left the Council, and he said to her :

“ My dear child, my service is yours ; but, I say to you again, your head will leave your neck if ever you pronounce your lover's name.”

“ Ah ! ” said the fair Amaside, “ what matters my neck if I may not put my arms round that of Nebucha . . . ! My father is a very wicked man. He not only refuses me the beautiful prince I adore, but he makes war on him : and then, vanquished by my lover, he finds means to change him into a bull. Did anyone ever know such horrid spite ? If my father were not my father, I don't know what I wouldn't do to him.”

“ It was not your father who played him this cruel trick,” said the wise Mambrès. “ It was a Palestinian,

one of our former enemies, a native of a little country comprised among a crowd of States which your august lover had to subdue to keep them in order. And these metamorphoses need not cause you surprise. You know that I used to work more remarkable ones in my time. Nothing was commoner then than these transformations which so astonish our wise men to-day. True history teaches—we have read it together—that Lycaon, King of Arcady, was changed into a wolf: the beautiful Calisto, his daughter, into a she-bear; Io, daughter of Inachus, actually our Isis, into a cow; Daphne into a laurel; Syrinx into a reed-flute.

“The Fair Edith, wife to Lot, the best and tenderest father ever seen, was she not, in our very neighbourhood, turned into a great statue of salt, and a very interesting and beautiful one, retaining the insignia of her sex, and still subject to the moon’s phases, as many eminent men and eye-witnesses attest (7)? I witnessed it myself when I was young. And I have seen five mighty cities, situated in the most arid tract in the world, suddenly turned into a fine lake. Why, in my young days, you couldn’t walk for metamorphoses. And finally, Madame, if examples may serve to soften your grief, remember that Venus changed the Cerastes into oxen.”

“I know,” said the unfortunate Princess, “but do examples console anyone?”

“Your sorrow may see an end,” said the sage, “and since your lover can become a bull, you can surely see that from a bull he may become a man once more. As for me, they must change me into a tiger or a crocodile ere I cease to employ the little power left me in the service of a Princess worthy of the world’s adoration, the beautiful Amaside, whom I nursed in my lap, and whom a fatal destiny subjects to such cruel trials.”





CHAPTER V

WISE CONDUCT OF THE WISE MAMBRÈS



divine Mambrès, having said everything he could to console the Princess, and having failed to console her, then hastened to find the old woman.

“Our profession,” said he, “is much to be admired, but is very dangerous ; you run the risk of being hanged, and your bull of being burnt, drowned, or devoured. I do not know what may be done to the other animals, for, prophet though I am, I know but little ; but conceal the serpent and the fish with all care ; do not let the one put his head out of the water, or the other leave his hole. The bull I will place in my own stables in the country ; you shall accompany him thither, since you say that you are not allowed to leave him. The scapegoat may well serve as scapegoat for the occasion ; we will lead him into the desert charged with the sins of the troop ; he is accustomed to the proceeding, which does him no harm, and a goat wandering at large can expiate anything. But I will beg of you to lend me, and at once, Tobias’s dog, that very speedy leveret, Balaam’s ass, which can outpace a dromedary, and the raven and the dove, which fly with extreme rapidity. I want to send them as envoys to Memphis on a matter of the utmost moment.”

The old woman answered the sage :

“ My lord, you may dispose at your will of Tobias’s dog, Balaam’s ass, the raven and the dove from the Ark, and also of the scapegoat, but my bull cannot house in a stable. It is ordained that he be attached by a steel chain, ‘ that his body be wet with the dew of heaven ’ and that ‘ his portion be with beasts in the grass of the earth ’ (8). He is entrusted to me, and I must obey. What would Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah think of me if I entrusted my bull to anyone else ? I see that you know the secret of this singular animal, but I have not to reproach myself with having revealed it. I shall lead him far from this unclean country, towards Lake Sirbon, far from the cruelties of the King of Tanis. My fish and my serpent will be my defence. I fear none when I serve my Master.”

And the sage Mambrès replied :

“ My good woman, God’s will be done ! If I may see my White Bull again, it matters not to me whether by Lake Sirbon, Lake Moeris, or the Lake of Sodom ; I wish him well, and you also. But why do you speak to me of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah ? ”

“ Ah, my lord,” replied the old woman, “ you know even as I do the part they have played in this great matter ; but I have no time to lose ; I have no wish to be hanged, and I have no wish that my bull should be burned, drowned, or devoured. I go hence, to Lake Sirbon, by Canope, with my serpent and my fish. Good-bye.”

The bull followed after her, with pensive air, but not before he had shown to the benevolent Mambrès the gratitude due to him.

The wise Mambrès was in cruel anxiety. He saw plainly that Amasis, King of Tanis, in despair over his daughter’s insane passion for this animal, and believing her bewitched, would pursue the wretched bull everywhere, and that it would infallibly be burnt, as a magician, in the public square of Tanis, or thrown to Jonah’s

whale, or roasted, or served up at table. He wished at any price to spare the Princess this annoyance.

He wrote a letter to his friend the High Priest of Memphis, in sacred character, on an Egyptian paper which was not yet in use. This letter was in these words :

“ Light of the World, Lieutenant of Isis, Osiris, and Horus, Chief of the circumcised, you whose altar is of right raised above all thrones, I learn that your God, the Bull Apis, is dead. I have another at your service. Come quickly with your priests and acknowledge and adore him, and lead him to the stalls of your Temple. May Isis, Osiris, and Horus have you in their holy keeping : and you, gentlemen, priests of Memphis, also in their holy keeping.

“ Your affectionate friend

“ MAMBRÈS.”

He made four copies of this letter, for fear of accident, and enclosed them in cases of ebony wood of the hardest. Then calling to him the four couriers he designed to carry his message, and they were the ass, the dog, the raven, and the dove, he said to the ass :

“ I know with what fidelity you served Balaam, my fellow ; serve me the same. There is no onocrotal to equal you in the race ; go, my dear friend, give my letter into the hands of the receiver, and return.” And the ass answered him :

“ Even as I served Balaam, I will serve my lord ; I will go, and I will return.”

The sage put the cylinder of ebony in her mouth, and she was off like an arrow.

Then he called up the dog of Tobias, and said to him :

“ Dog, faithful, and swifter in the race than light-footed Achilles, I know what you did for Tobias, the son of Tobias, when you and the Angel Raphael accompanied him from Nineveh to Rages in Media, and

from Rages to Nineveh, and he brought back to his father the ten talents which Tobias the elder, a slave, had lent to the slave Gabelus—for these slaves were very rich. Carry this letter, which is worth more than ten talents of silver, to its address.” And the dog answered him :

“ My lord, if once on a time I followed Raphael, the messenger, I can equally well do your commission.”

Mambrès gave him the letter in his mouth, and spoke to the dove to the same effect. She answered him :

“ My lord, as I brought back a green branch to the Ark, so will I bring back word in the same way.” She took the letter in her beak. All three were lost to sight in an instant. Then he addressed himself to the raven :

“ I know that you nourished the great prophet Elijah, when he was hidden near the brook Kerith, so famous throughout the earth (9). Every day you took him white bread and plump chickens, but I only ask you to bear this letter to Memphis.”

The raven answered in these words :

“ True it is, my lord, that I bore dinner every day to the great prophet Elijah, the Tishbite, whom I saw mount into the air on a fiery chariot drawn by four fiery horses, little as it is the custom : but I always took half his dinner for myself. I will willingly carry your letter provided that you assure me two good meals each day, and that I am paid cash down and in advance for my commission.”

Said Mambrès in wrath : “ Evil and gluttonous creature, I am not surprised that Apollo turned you from the whiteness of the swan which was yours, to the blackness of the mole, when in the Thessalian plains you betrayed the beautiful Coronis, the unhappy mother of Æsculapius ! Perhaps you will tell me that you ate joints and chickens every day during the ten months in the Ark ? ”

“ Sir, we fed very well,” replied the raven. “ There

was roast meat twice a day for all the birds of my kind, who live on flesh, such as vultures, kites, eagles, buzzards, hawks, falcons, owls, all the innumerable multitude of birds of prey. And still greater profusion reigned at the board spread for the lions, tigers, panthers, ounces, hyenas, wolves, bears, foxes, weasels, and all carnivorous quadrupeds. There were eight persons of note in the Ark, the only people in the world, incessantly busied with the care of our table and wardrobe, namely : Noah and his wife, then scarcely six hundred years of age, their three sons and their three sons' wives. It was a pleasure to witness the care and cleanliness with which our eight servants looked after four thousand guests all with great appetites, without reckoning the prodigious trouble exacted by ten or twelve thousand others, from the elephant and the giraffe, down to the silk-worms and the flies. What astonishes me is that our purveyor, Noah, should be unknown to all the nations who spring from him ; but I care little for that. I have seen equally good feasting in Thrace, under King Xissutre (10). These things happen from time to time, for the edification of ravens. In one word, I choose to be well fed, and to be paid cash down."

The wise Mambrès took care not to give his letter to so tiresome and garrulous a creature—they parted very ill-content with one another.

Meanwhile it was necessary to know what had become of the beautiful bull, and not to lose trace of the old woman and the serpent. Mambrès ordered some intelligent and faithful servants to follow them, and he himself proceeded, in his litter, along the bank of the Nile, pursuing his reflections as usual.

“ How can it be,” he said within himself, “ that this serpent should be master of the greater part of the world, as he boasts, and as many learned men avow, and yet be in obedience to an old woman ? How is it that he is sometimes called in council by Those above, even while

he is crawling on earth ? How is it that he enters any day into anyone's body, and that so many sages pretend to drive him out with a form of words ? And why, finally, is he supposed by a small neighbouring tribe to have been the ruin of the human race, and how is it that the human race knows nothing about it ? I am very old, my life has been one of continuous study, but I see in all this a large number of incompatibles which I cannot reconcile. I cannot explain my own experiences, neither the wonders I used to perform myself, nor those to which I was once witness. When I weigh all considerations I begin to suspect that this world of ours consists of contradictions. *Rerum concordia discors*, as our master Zoroaster was wont to say in his own tongue."

While he was engaged in this metaphysic, obscure like all metaphysic, a boatman, singing a drinking-song, ran a little boat against the bank. Out of it came three grave personages, half-clothed in dirty rags, but preserving under the cloak of poverty a most august and majestic bearing. They were Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah.





Daniel, Ezekiel and Jeremiah



CHAPTER VI *HOW MAMBRÈS MET THE PROPHETS AND GAVE THEM A GOOD DINNER*



THESE three great men, whose countenances shone with prophetic light, knew Mambrès for one of themselves by such traces of the same light as were still his, and prostrated themselves before his palanquin. And Mambrès knew them for prophets even more by their habiliments than by the rays of light emitted from their august heads. He had but little doubt that they came for news of the White Bull, and with his usual prudence, he stepped out of his litter and went some paces to meet them in dignified politeness. He assisted them to rise, ordered tents to be set up, and bade prepare a dinner of which he judged the prophets to be in great need.

He sent to invite the old woman, who had not gone more than five hundred paces. She accepted the invitation, and arrived still leading the White Bull on the chain.

Two soups were served, a bisque and a potage à la reine ; the entrées were a tart of carps' tongues and pikes' livers, chickens stuffed with pistachio, young pigeons with olives and truffles, turkeys with crayfish, mushrooms and morels, and cipiolata. The roasts were pheasants, partridges, Guinea fowl, quails and ortolans, and four

salads. In the midst was a table-centre in most perfect taste. Nothing could have been more delicate than were the sweets—nothing more magnificent, brilliant, and resourceful than the dessert.

And the discreet Mambrès took the greatest care that there should be neither roast nor boiled beef, no ox-tongue, nor cheek, nor cow-heel, lest the unfortunate monarch, not at the board but near it, should feel himself insulted.

That great but unhappy prince browsed on the grass near by the tent. Never had he felt so cruelly the fatal change which had deprived him of his throne for seven years long. “Alas!” he said within himself, “this Daniel who changed me into a bull, and this witch of a sooth-sayer, who leads me about, are eating the very best of dinners, and I, the ruler of Asia, am reduced to eating hay and drinking water!”

They drank freely of the wines of Engaddi, of Tadmor, and of Shiraz. When the prophets and the witch felt the wine working within them, they spoke more freely than at the first bout.

“I must own,” said Daniel, “that I did not do so well when I was in the lions’ den.”

“What, Sir?” said Mambrès. “Were you put in a lions’ den? How was it that you were not eaten?”

“Sir,” said Daniel, “you must know that lions never eat prophets.”

“As for me,” said Jeremiah, “my whole life has been passed dying of hunger, and I have never had a good meal until to-day. Were I to be born again, and could choose my condition, I own that I would a hundred times rather be controller-general, or Bishop of Babylon, than a prophet of Jerusalem.”

Ezekiel said (11): “Once it was ordained that I should sleep three hundred and ninety days running on my left side, and eat nothing all that time save barley-bread and millet, vetches and beans, and cheese covered with . . .

I cannot say it. The utmost I could obtain was that it should be but cow-dung. I must avow that my lord Mambrès's is a more delicate cuisine. Still, the prophet's calling has its good side ; and the proof of that is in the numbers who engage in it."

"By the by," said Mambrès, "explain to me what you mean by your Ahola and Aholibah, who made so much of certain horses and asses ? "

"Mere flowers of rhetoric," replied Ezekiel.

Their hearts being opened, Mambrès spoke of business. He asked the three pilgrims why they had come to the Kingdom of Tanis. Daniel it was who answered : he said that the Kingdom of Babylon had been in a ferment since the disappearance of Nabuchodonosor, that all the prophets had been persecuted, according to court custom ; that their time was divided between seeing Kings at their feet, and receiving a hundred strokes of the rod : and that at last they had been obliged to seek refuge in Egypt for fear of being stoned to death. Ezekiel and Jeremiah also spoke at great length and in admirable style, but were not easy of comprehension. As for the witch, she never took her eye off her animal. Jonah's whale was still in the Nile, opposite the tent, and the serpent played about on the grass.

After coffee they strolled on the banks of the Nile. Whereupon the White Bull, perceiving his enemies, the three prophets, set up an appalling bellowing ; he rushed impetuously upon them, and struck them with his horns ; and since prophets are never but skin and bone, he would have pierced them through and through and deprived them of life ; but the Master of Things, who sees all and provides against all, changed them on the spot into magpies ; and they continued to talk even as before. The same thing happened afterwards to the Pierides, to such lengths does fable go in its imitation of history. This fresh incident raised fresh reflection in the mind of the wise Mambrès.

"Behold," said he, "three great prophets changed into magpies: that should teach us not to talk too much, but always to observe a suitable discretion." He concluded that wisdom was worth more than eloquence, and was thinking profoundly, as was his custom, when a great and terrible sight met his gaze.





CHAPTER VII *THE KING OF TANIS ARRIVES.
HIS DAUGHTER AND THE BULL ARE ABOUT TO BE
SACRIFICED*

WHIRLWINDS of dust came up from south to north. A noise was heard of drums and trumpets, fifes, psalteries, citherns and sackbuts ; there was an advance of squadrons and battalions, and Amasis, King of Tanis, rode at their head on a horse caparisoned with a scarlet and gold saddle-cloth ; and heralds cried :

“ Let the White Bull be taken, and bound, and thrown into the Nile, and given to the fish of Jonah to eat ; for the King, our lord, who is just, would avenge him on the White Bull who has bewitched his daughter.”

The good old man, Mambrès, reflected more than ever. He saw plainly that the malicious raven had gone and told the King everything, and that the Princess ran great risk of having her head cut off. He said to the serpent :

“ My friend, go quickly and console the fair Amaside, my nursling : tell her not to be afraid whatever may happen, and tell her stories to charm her anxiety, for stories always amuse young women, and it is only by telling stories that one can get on in this world.”

Then he prostrated himself before Amasis, King of Tanis, and said to him :

“ O King ! Live for ever. The White Bull must be sacrificed, for your Majesty is always in the right. But the Master of Things has said : ‘ This bull must not be eaten by Jonah’s fish until Memphis shall have found a god to replace her god which is dead.’ Then shall you be avenged, and your daughter exorcised, for she is possessed. Your piety is too great but that you will obey the commands of the Master of Things.”

Amasis, King of Tanis, became thoughtful, and said :

“ The Bull Apis is dead : God have his soul : when do you suppose another bull will be found to reign over a fruitful Egypt ? ”

“ Sire,” said Mambrès, “ I ask but eight days.”

The King, who was very pious, said : “ I grant them, and am willing to rest here eight days ; after that, I will sacrifice my daughter’s seducer.”

And he called up his tents, his cooks, and his musicians, and rested eight days in that place as it is said in Manethon.

The old woman was in despair when she saw that the bull, her charge, had but eight days to live. She caused apparitions to attend the King’s couch every night, to turn him from his cruel resolution, but the King forgot in the morning the apparitions he had seen in the night, even as Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten his dreams.





CHAPTER VIII *HOW THE SERPENT TOLD STORIES TO THE PRINCESS IN ORDER TO CONSOLE HER*

MEANWHILE the serpent was telling stories to the fair Amaside to allay her sorrows. He told her how he had formerly healed a whole people of the bite of certain small serpents by merely showing himself at the end of a stick. He made known to her the conquests of the hero who made so admirable a contrast with Amphion, the architect of Thebes in Boeotia. Amphion summoned building stones by the sound of his fiddle ; a rigadoon and a minuet sufficed him for the building of a city ; but this other destroyed them at the sound of a goat's horn ; hanged one and thirty Kings in a district four leagues long and as many wide ; rained down great stones from the heavens on his enemies as they fled before him, and having thus exterminated them, stayed the sun and the moon at midday to exterminate them again between Gabaon and Ajalon on the road to Bethoron, as Bacchus had done who stayed the sun and the moon on his voyage to the Indies.

The prudence common to serpents forbade him to speak with the fair Amaside of the mighty bastard Jephtha, who cut off his daughter's head because he had gained a battle : it would have cast terror into the heart of the beautiful princess ; but he told her of the deeds of the

great Samson, who slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, who tied three hundred foxes together by their tails, and who himself was taken in the nets of a young person less beautiful, less tender, and less faithful than the charming Amaside.

He recounted the unlucky loves of Sichem and the pleasing Dinah, aged six years, and the happier loves of Boaz and Ruth, and those of Judah with his daughter-in-law Thamar, of Lot with his two daughters, who were unwilling that the race should finish, of Abraham and Jacob with their maidservants, of Reuben with his mother, of David and of Bathsheba, and those of the great King Solomon ; in fine, everything that could possibly dissipate the grief of a beautiful princess.





CHAPTER IX

HOW THE SERPENT FAILED TO CONSOLE HER

“ **A**LL these stories weary me,” replied the fair Amaside, who had both intelligence and taste. “ They are only worth commenting by that lunatic Abbadie among the Irish, or among the Welsh by some phrase-maker like d’Houteville. Tales told to the great-great-grandmother of my grandmother’s great-great-grandmother, are no longer any good for me, who was brought up by the wise Mambrès, and have read the *Essay on Human Understanding*, by the Egyptian philosopher Locke, and the *Matron of Ephesus*. I want a tale to be based on probability, and that it should not be altogether a dream. I wish that it be devoid of triviality and extravagance. And above all I ask that, under the clothing of fable, those who use their eyes may see in it some subtle truth which escapes the vulgar. I am tired of a sun and moon that an old woman can do what she likes with, of mountains that skip, or rivers that run back to their source, and of dead people who come to life ; and when, on the top of that, insipid tales of the kind are written in an inflated and unintelligible style, they disgust me beyond measure. You are not incapable of perceiving that a girl who fears to see her lover swallowed by a great fish, and that she herself may have her head cut off by her own father, has

need of distraction ; but consult my taste in your efforts to entertain.”

“ You impose on me a very difficult task,” replied the Serpent. “ There was a time when I could have given you some pleasant half-hours ; but for some while past I have lost my imagination and my memory. Alas ! Where are the days when I was entertaining to young women ! Still, let us see whether I cannot find some moral tale that may please.

“ Twenty-five thousand years ago King Gnaof and Queen Patra were on the throne of Thebes of the hundred gates. King Gnaof was very handsome, and Queen Patra even more beautiful ; but they could not produce children. King Gnaof offered a prize to him who could show the best way to perpetuate the royal race. The Faculty of Medicine and the Academy of Surgery published excellent treatises on this important question ; none was successful. The Queen was sent to take the waters ; she made novenas ; she gave much money to the Temple of Jupiter Ammon, whence we have sal-ammoniac, but all was useless. At length a young priest of twenty-five years of age came before the King and said to him : ‘ Sir, I believe that I can work the spell which will operate that which your Majesty so ardently desires. But I must speak a word in secret in the ear of Madame, your wife ; and if she does not become fruitful, I am willing to be hanged.’ ‘ I accept your proposal,’ said King Gnaof. The Queen and the priest were left together but one quarter of an hour. The Queen became big, and the King wanted to hang the priest.”

“ Good gracious ! ” said the princess, “ I see the end already. The story is so common ; and I don’t mind telling you it shocks my modesty. Tell me some really true fable, something vouched for, something really moral, that I have never heard before, that may succeed in ‘ shaping my understanding and my heart ’ as the Egyptian professor Linro (12) says.”

“Hear this one, Madame,” said the good-looking serpent, “which is as authentic as may be.”

“There were three prophets, all three equally ambitious, and disgusted with their condition. Their folly was that of wishing they were Kings. For there is but one step from the rank of prophet to that of monarch, and man always aspires to mount every step of the ladder of fortune. Otherwise, their tastes and pleasures were absolutely different. The first would preach admirably to his assembled brothers, who clapped their hands at him ; the second was mad about music, and the third was passionately fond of women. The Angel Ithuriel presented himself before them one day when they were at table conversing on the delights of royalty.

“‘The Master of Things,’ the Angel told them, ‘sends me to you to reward your virtue. Not only shall you be Kings, but you shall continuously gratify your ruling passions. You, first prophet, I make King of Egypt, and your council shall be always in session, and shall applaud your eloquence and wisdom. You, second prophet, shall reign over Persia, and shall continually hear divine music ; and you, third prophet, I make King of India, and give you a charming mistress, who shall never leave you.’

“He to whom Egypt came as his portion began by summoning his privy council, which numbered no more than two hundred sages. He held a long discourse, as etiquette ordained, and was greatly applauded, and the monarch tasted to the full the sweets of an intoxication of praise uncorrupted by any flattery. The council of foreign affairs followed on the privy council. It was much more numerous, and a new discourse received still greater plaudits. It was the same in the other councils. There was no moment of respite in the pleasure and glory of the prophet-King of Egypt. His eloquence was noised throughout the land.

“The prophet-King of Persia began by commanding himself an Italian opera of which the choruses were sung

by fifteen hundred eunuchs. Their voices stirred his soul, even to the marrow of his bones, wherein it resides. And to this opera succeeded another, and to this a third, and without interruption.

“The King of India shut himself up with his mistress, and tasted the perfection of pleasure in her company. The necessity of caressing her without cease seemed to him a sovereign happiness, and he pitied the sorry lot of his two fellows, of whom one was reduced to sitting for ever in council, and the other was always at the Opera.

“Each one of them, a few days later, heard beneath his window some woodcutters leaving an inn for the neighbouring forest, to cut wood, arm-in-arm with sweethearts they were at liberty to change at will. Our Kings begged Ithuriel to intercede on their behalf with the Master of Things, and get them made woodcutters.”

“I do not know,” the tender Amaside interrupted him, “whether the Master of Things granted their request, and I do not much care; but I know that I should ask nothing of anyone, were I shut up alone with my lover, my own dear Nebuchadnezzar.”

The palace vaults resounded to the mighty name. At first Amaside had said but Ne, then Nebu, then Nebucha: but finally her passion transported her; she pronounced the fatal name at full length, despite the promise she had made to the King, her father. All the ladies of the palace repeated Nebuchadnezzar, and the malicious raven did not fail to go and tell the King. The countenance of Amasis, King of Tanis, was troubled, for his heart was full of trouble. And so it was that the serpent, who was the most prudent and subtle of animals, always did harm to women, while thinking to do good.

But Amasis, in wrath, sent then and there in search of his daughter a dozen of his alguazils, who are always ready to execute any barbarity the King commands, and give as their reason: “That is what we are paid for.”



CHAPTER X

HOW THE PRINCESS WAS ABOUT TO HAVE HER HEAD CUT OFF, AND HOW IT WAS NOT CUT OFF



S soon as the Princess arrived, all of a tremble, in the camp of the King, her father, he said to her :

“ My daughter, you are aware that all princesses who disobey the King, their father, are put to death, for otherwise a kingdom could not be properly governed.

I had forbidden you to utter the name of your lover, Nebuchadnezzar, my mortal enemy, who dethroned me very nearly seven years ago, and has since disappeared from earth. You have chosen in his place a white bull, and you have exclaimed Nebuchadnezzar ! It is just that I sever your neck.”

The Princess replied : “ My father, may it be done according to your will ; but give me time to bewail my virginity.” “ That is but just,” said King Amasis ; “ it is an established rule among all enlightened and prudent princes. I give you the entire day to bewail your virginity, since you say you have any. To-morrow, the eighth day of my camping, I shall have the White Bull swallowed by the fish, and I shall cut off your head at nine o’clock in the morning.”

So the fair Amaside wandered along the Nile, with the ladies of the palace, to bewail all the virginity she

had. The wise Mambrès, at her side, reflected, and reckoned the hours and minutes.

“Well, my dear Mambrès,” she said to him, “you changed the waters of the Nile into blood, in your customary way, and you cannot change the heart of my father, King of Tanis ! You will allow him to cut off my head to-morrow morning at nine o’clock !”

“That,” replied Mambrès, ever meditative, “will depend on the diligence of my couriers.”

On the morrow, when the shadow of obelisk and pyramid marked on the ground the ninth hour of the day, they bound the White Bull that he might be thrown to Jonah’s fish, and they brought the King his big sword. “Alas, alas !” said Nebuchadnezzar, in his innermost heart. “I, the King, have been a bull for nearly seven years, and hardly have I found my mistress but they give me to a fish to eat.”

Never had Mambrès reflected so deeply. He was absorbed in his sad thoughts when he saw afar off all that he was expecting. An innumerable crowd drew nigh. The three figures of Isis, Osiris, and Horus, grouped together, came on, borne on a litter of gold and precious stones by a hundred senators of Memphis, and preceded by a hundred damsels playing on the sacred sistrum. Four thousand priests, their heads shaved and crowned with flowers, rode, each, on a hippopotamus. Further on appeared with the same pomp the sheep of Thebes, the dog of Bubastes, the cat of Phœbus, the crocodile of Arsinoe, the goat of Mendes, and all the inferior gods of Egypt, coming to pay homage to the great Bull, the great god Apis, mighty as Isis, Osiris, and Horus put together.

In the midst of these half-gods, forty priests bore an immense basket filled with sacred onions, which were not exactly gods, but were uncommonly like them. On either side of this file of gods followed by an innumerable people, marched forty thousand warriors, helmet on head, scimitar on thigh, quiver on shoulder, and bow in

hand. All the priests sang in chorus, with a harmony which uplifted and shook the soul :

“ Now our Bull is dead and gone
We will have a better one.”

And, at every pause, were heard to resound sistra, and castanets, psalteries, tambourines, bagpipes, and sackbuts.





CHAPTER XI *HOW THE PRINCESS WAS WEDD'D TO HER BULL*



MASIS, King of Tanis, surprised at this spectacle, did not cut off his daughter's head: he returned his scimitar to its sheath. Mambrès said:

“Great King! The order of things is changed. Your Majesty must lead the way. O King! unbind the White Bull at once, with your own hands, and be the first to adore him.”

Amasis obeyed, and prostrated himself with his whole people. The high-priest of Memphis offered the new bull Apis the first handful of hay. The Princess Amaside hung his beautiful horns with festoons of roses, anemones, buttercups, tulips, carnations, and hyacinths. She took the liberty of kissing him, though with deep respect. The priests strewed the road which led to Memphis with palms and flowers, and the wise Mambrès, still pursuing his reflections, said to his friend the serpent in a whisper:

“Daniel changed this man into a bull, and I have changed this bull into a god.”

Memphis was returned to in the same order. The King of Tanis, quite confused, marched behind, Mambrès, serene and self-possessed, at his side. The old woman followed, marvelling much, and accompanied by the serpent, the dog, the she-ass, the raven, the dove, and the scapegoat.

The whale swam up the Nile. Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, in the form of magpies, closed the procession.

When they were arrived at the frontiers of the kingdom, which was not far, King Amasis took leave of the Bull Apis, and said to his daughter :

“ My daughter, let us return to our dominions, that I may cut off your head ; even as it was determined in my royal breast, while you have pronounced the name of Nebuchadnezzar, my enemy, who dethroned me seven years ago. When a father has sworn to cut off his daughter’s head, he must necessarily accomplish his oath, otherwise he is precipitated for ever into the infernal regions, and I have no wish to be damned for love of you.”

The beautiful Princess made answer to the King in these words :

“ My dear Father, go and cut off any head you wish, but it will not be mine. I am in the territories of Isis, Osiris, and Horus, and of Apis. I will not leave my beautiful White Bull. I will kiss him the whole way along the road, until I have seen his apotheosis in the great stables of the Holy City of Memphis ; a pardonable weakness in a young woman of good family.”

Hardly had she pronounced these words when the Bull Apis cried :

“ My dear Amaside, I will love you all my life.”

It was the first time that Apis had been heard to speak in Egypt during the forty thousand years of his worship. The serpent and the ass cried, “ The seven years are accomplished,” and the three pies repeated, “ The seven years are accomplished ! ” All the priests of Egypt raised their hands to Heaven. Suddenly all saw the god shed his two front legs ; his hind legs changed into human legs ; fair-fleshed arms, muscular and white, sprang from the shoulders ; his bull’s muzzle gave place to the features of the charming hero, and he became once more the handsomest man on earth ; and he said :

“ Rather would I be the lover of Amaside, than a god. I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Kings.”

This fresh metamorphosis astonished all, save the reflective Mambrès: but what astonished no one was that Nebuchadnezzar married the fair Amaside then and there in the presence of that great multitude.

He confirmed his father-in-law in the Kingdom of Tanis, and established rich foundations for the serpent, the dog, the dove, and even for the raven, the three magpies, and the great fish: thus showing all the world that he could pardon even as he could triumph. The old woman had a fat pension. The scapegoat was sent into the wilderness for a day that all sins might be expiated, and after that had twelve she-goats given him to make up for it. The wise Mambrès returned to the palace to pursue his reflections. Nebuchadnezzar, having embraced him, governed in tranquillity the Kingdom of Memphis, and that of Babylon, of Damascus, Baalbec, Tyre, Syria, Asia Minor, and Scythia, and the countries of Shiraz, Mosak, Tubal, Madai, Gog and Magog, Javan, Sogdiana, Bactriana, the Indies, and the Isles.

All the peoples of this monarchy would cry every morning :

“ Long live Nebuchadnezzar, King of Kings, who is no longer a bull ! ”

And ever since, it has been the custom in Babylon that every time the King, having been grossly deceived by his satraps, or by his wise men, or by his treasurers, or by his women, recognised his errors, and corrected his ill conduct, that all the people should cry at his gate :

“ Long live our great King, who is no longer a bull ! ”





STORY OF A GOOD BRAHMIN

(1759)

IN my travels I met an old Brahmin, a very wise man, of marked intellect, and great learning. Furthermore he was rich and, consequently, all the wiser, because, lacking nothing, he needed to deceive nobody. His household was very well managed by three handsome women, who set themselves out to please him. When he was not amusing himself with his women, he passed the time in philosophising. Near his house, which was beautifully decorated and had charming gardens attached, there lived a narrow-minded old Indian woman: she was a simpleton, and rather poor.

Said the Brahmin to me one day—"I wish I had never been born!" On my asking why, he answered—"I have been studying forty years, and that is forty years wasted. I teach others and myself am ignorant of everything. Such a state of affairs fills my soul with so much humiliation and disgust that my life is intolerable. I was born in Time, I live in Time, and yet I do not know what Time is. I am at a point between two eternities, as our wise men say, and I have no conception of eternity. I am composed of matter: I think, but I have never been able to learn what produces my thought. I do not know whether or no my understanding is a simple faculty inside

me, such as those of walking and digesting, and whether or no I think with my head as I grip with my hands. Not only is the cause of my thought unknown to me ; the cause of my actions is equally a mystery. I do not know why I exist, and yet every day people ask me questions on all these points. I have to reply, and as I have nothing really worth saying I talk a great deal, and am ashamed of myself afterwards for having talked.

“ It is worse still when I am asked if Brahma was born of Vishnu or if they are both eternal. God is my witness that I have not the remotest idea, and my ignorance shows itself in my replies. ‘ Ah, Holy One,’ people say to me, ‘ tell us why evil pervades the earth.’ I am in as great a difficulty as those who ask me this question. Sometimes I tell them that everything is as well as can be, but those who have been ruined and broken in the wars do not believe a word of it—and no more do I. I retire to my home stricken at my own curiosity and ignorance. I read our ancient books, and they double my darkness. I talk to my companions : some answer me that we must enjoy life and make game of mankind ; others think they know a lot and lose themselves in a maze of wild ideas. Everything increases my anguish. I am ready sometimes to despair when I think that after all my seeking I do not know whence I came, whither I go, what I am nor what I shall become.”

The good man’s condition really worried me. Nobody was more rational or more sincere than he. I perceived that his unhappiness increased in proportion as his understanding developed and his insight grew.

The same day I saw the old woman who lived near him. I asked her if she had ever been troubled by the thought that she was ignorant of the nature of her soul. She did not even understand my question. Never in all her life had she reflected for one single moment on one single point of all those which tormented the Brahmin. She believed with all her heart in the metamorphoses of

Vishnu and, provided she could obtain a little Ganges water wherewith to wash herself, thought herself the happiest of women.

Struck with this mean creature's happiness, I returned to my wretched philosopher. "Are you not ashamed," said I, "to be unhappy when at your very door there lives an old automaton who thinks about nothing, and yet lives contentedly?"

"You are right," he replied. "I have told myself a hundred times that I should be happy if I were as brainless as my neighbour, and yet I do not desire such happiness."

My Brahmin's answer impressed me more than all the rest. I set to examining myself, and I saw that in truth I would not care to be happy at the price of being a simpleton.

I put the matter before some philosophers, and they were of my opinion. "Nevertheless," said I, "there is a tremendous contradiction in this mode of thought, for, after all, the problem is—how to be happy. What does it matter whether one has brains or not? Further, those who are contented with their lot are certain of their contentment, whereas those who reason are not certain that they reason correctly. It is quite clear, therefore," I continued, "that we must choose not to have common sense, however little common sense may contribute to our discomfort." Everyone agreed with me, but I found nobody, notwithstanding, who was willing to accept the bargain of becoming a simpleton in order to become contented. From which I conclude that if we consider the question of happiness we must consider still more the question of reason.

But on reflection it seems that to prefer reason to felicity is to be very senseless. How can this contradiction be explained? Like all the other contradictions. It is matter for much talk.



THE SIMPLE SOUL

A True Story culled from Father Quesnel's
Manuscripts

(1767)

CHAPTER I *HOW THE PRIOR OF OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAIN AND HIS SISTER MET A HURON*



NE day St. Dunstan, Irish by race and saint by profession, left Ireland on a little mountain which sailed towards the coast of France and arrived on this vehicle in the bay of St. Malo. When he had disembarked, he gave his mountain the benediction: it made him several low curtsies and returned to Ireland by the road by which it had come.

Dunstan founded a little priory in those parts, and called it the Priory of the Mountain, which name, as everyone knows, it still bears.

In the year 1689, on the evening of the 15th of July, Father Kerkabon, Prior of Our Lady of the Mountain, was walking on the seashore with his sister, Mademoiselle Kerkabon, taking the air. The Prior, who was already growing old, was a very good priest, as much loved by the men among his neighbours as he had been formerly

by the women. What really made him much esteemed was that he was the only incumbent in the district who did not have to be carried home to bed after a convivial supper. He had a suitable knowledge of theology, and when he was tired of St. Augustine amused himself with Rabelais. And everyone spoke well of him.

Mademoiselle Kerkabon, who had never been married, despite her ardent desire to be, had still at the age of forty-five some of the freshness of her youth. She was a good, sensitive woman, liked pleasure, and was pious.

Said the Prior to his sister, looking at the sea : “Alas ! here it was that our poor brother embarked with our dear sister-in-law, his wife, on board the frigate ‘Swallow’ in 1669 to serve in Canada. If he hasn’t been killed, we may hope to see him again.”

“Do you think,” said Mademoiselle Kerkabon, “our sister-in-law was eaten by the Iroquois as people said ? It’s certain that if she hadn’t been eaten she would have come back. I shall weep for her all my life ; she was a charming woman. Our brother was a clever man and would assuredly have made a big fortune.”

While they were indulging their sorrow at this sad recollection, they saw a little ship coming into the bay of Rence on the tide : it carried some Englishmen, who were come to sell some of the products of their country. They jumped ashore without even looking at the Prior or his sister, who was very displeased with the little attention they paid her.

This was not the case with a very well-built young man who with one bound leaped over the heads of his companions and found himself face to face with Mademoiselle. Not being acquainted with the custom of bowing, he nodded to her. His face and his attire attracted the attention of the Prior and the Prior’s sister. His head and legs were bare, his feet were shod with small sandals, his hair was long and braided, a small doublet fitted his fine, easy figure closely ; he looked soldierly but gentle.

In one hand he held a little bottle of Barbadoes water (1), and in the other a sort of little bag in which was a drinking-cup and some very good sea-bread. He spoke very intelligible French. To Mademoiselle Kerkabon and her brother he offered his Barbadoes water, drank with them, and made them drink again, and all this so simply and naturally that the brother and sister were charmed with him. They placed themselves at his disposal, asking who he was and whither he was bound. The young man answered that he had not the faintest idea, that he was naturally inquisitive, that he had wished to see what the coast of France was like, that here he was, and that he was going to return home.

The Prior, judging from his accent that he was not English, took the liberty of asking his nationality.

“I am a Huron,” answered the young man.

Mademoiselle Kerkabon, astonished and delighted to see a Huron who had paid her attention, asked the young man to supper; he did not have to be asked twice, and all three set off together to the Priory of Our Lady of the Mountain.

The short, plump spinster devoured him with both her little eyes, and from time to time said to the Prior:—“This great boy has a milk and rose complexion! what lovely skin for a Huron!”

“Indeed, my sister, he has,” answered the Prior.

She asked him a hundred questions one after the other, and the traveller’s answers were very apposite each time.

The news soon spread that there was a Huron at the Priory. All the well-bred people in the district hastened to sup there. Father Saint Yves came with his sister, a young girl from Lower Brittany, very pretty and refined. The bailie, the collector of poll-tax and their wives were present at the supper. The foreigner was put between Mademoiselle Kerkabon and Mademoiselle Saint Yves. Everyone looked at him admiringly: everyone spoke to him and questioned him at the same time.

It looked as though he should have taken Lord Bolingbroke's motto as his own—*nihil admirari*. But at last, worn out with all the noise, he said to them, gently enough, but firmly too: "Gentlemen, in my country people usually speak one after the other; how do you think I can answer your questions when you don't wait to hear what I have to say?"

Reason always makes men withdraw into themselves for a few moments: there was a sudden silence. The bailie, who always took complete possession of foreigners in no matter whose house they were, and who was the most inquisitive man in the province, opened his mouth wide. "What is your name, sir?" he asked.

"I have always been called 'The Simple Soul,'" answered the Huron, "and in England this name stuck to me because I always say naïvely what I think, just as I do all I wish."

"Seeing that you were born Huron, how did you come to go to England?"

"I was taken there. The English had made me prisoner in a battle, and as they admire bravery (because they are themselves brave, and as honest as we are) they gave me the choice of being given back to my parents or taken to England. I accepted the second proposition because I have a natural passionate love of travel."

"But," said the bailie with his imposing voice, "how could you leave your father and mother like that?"

"Because I never knew either my father or my mother," answered the foreigner.

The company were quite sad, and everyone murmured, "Neither father nor mother."

"We will be father and mother to him," said the mistress of the house to her brother the Prior. "This Huron gentleman is very interesting!"

The Simple Soul thanked her with fine, proud cordiality, and let her understand he stood in need of nothing.

"I remark, Mr. Simple Soul," said the bailie gravely, "that you speak French better than any Huron has a right to."

"That's the fault of a Frenchman we took when I was quite young ; I conceived a great friendship for him, and he taught me his language : I learn very quickly what I want to learn. On arriving at Plymouth I came across one of those French refugees whom you call 'Huguenots,' I don't know why ; he helped me make some progress in your language, and as soon as I could express myself intelligibly I came to see your country, because I am tolerably fond of Frenchmen when they don't ask too many questions."

In spite of this little hint, Father Saint Yves asked him which language pleased him best—Huron, English or French ?

"Huron without question," answered the Simple Soul.

"Really !" cried Mademoiselle Kerkabon. "I always thought French was the most beautiful language of all after Low-Breton."

Then somebody had to ask the Huron for tobacco, and the Simple Soul said it was "taya" : and eating, which was "essenten." Mademoiselle Kerkabon insisted on knowing the Huron for "loving." "Trovander," he replied, and maintained, not without some show of reason, that those words were quite as good as the equivalent French and English. All the company thought "Trovander" a very pretty word.

The Prior had in his library the Huron grammar, which had been presented to him by the Reverend Father Sagar Théodat, the famous Recollet missionary : he left the table for a moment to go to consult it. He came back puffing with affection and delight. He recognised, that the Simple Soul was a real Huron. The guests argued a little on the multiplicity of languages, and it was agreed that but for the misadventure of the

Tower of Babel French would have been spoken all over the world.

The inquisitive bailie, who up to then had been mistrustful of the visitor, conceived a deep respect for him, and spoke to him much more civilly than before: but this the Simple Soul did not notice.

Mademoiselle Saint Yves was very curious to know how the Hurons made love in their own country.

“By making nice movements to please young ladies like you,” he replied.

All the guests clapped their hands in admiration. Mademoiselle Saint Yves blushed and was very well pleased. Mademoiselle Kerkabon blushed too, but she was not so well pleased. She was rather piqued that the compliment had not been addressed to her, but she was such a good person that her affection for the Huron was in no wise weakened. With much goodheartedness she asked him how many mistresses he had had in Huronia.

“Only one,” answered the Simple Soul. “That was Mademoiselle Abacaba, my foster-mother’s very good friend. The bamboo is not straighter, the ermine whiter, the lamb less gentle, the eagle less proud, the stag less nimble than was Abacaba. One day she was hunting a hare in our neighbourhood, some fifty leagues from our dwelling-place, when an ill-bred Algonquin, who lived a hundred leagues further off, came to take her hare; I learned of it, ran to the spot, felled the Algonquin with a club and dragged him bound hand and foot to my mistress’s feet. Abacaba’s relations wanted to eat him, but I have never cared for that sort of banquet; I gave him his liberty and made a friend of him. Abacaba was so touched by my action that she made me her favourite lover. She would still love me had she not been eaten by a bear: I punished the bear, I wore his skin for a long time; but that’s not much consolation.”

Mademoiselle Saint Yves felt a secret joy at learning

that the Simple Soul had had only one mistress, and that Abacaba was no more ; but she did not fathom the cause of her joy. Everyone looked at the Simple Soul, and praised him very highly for having stopped his comrades eating an Algonquin.

The pitiless bailie, who could not restrain his mania for asking questions, finally pushed inquisitiveness so far as to ask the Huron's religion. Had he espoused the Anglican religion, the Gallican or the Huguenot ?

"I have my religion, just as you have yours," replied the young man.

"What a pity!" cried Mademoiselle Kerkabon. "I see those wretched English never even thought of baptising him."

"Oh, Heaven!" said Mademoiselle Saint Yves. "How is it that the Hurons are not Catholics ? Can it be that the Reverend Jesuit Fathers haven't yet converted them all ?"

The Simple Soul assured her that in his country nobody converted anybody ; that a true Huron never changed his opinions, and that in his language there was not even a word signifying "inconstancy." These last words pleased Mademoiselle Saint Yves exceedingly.

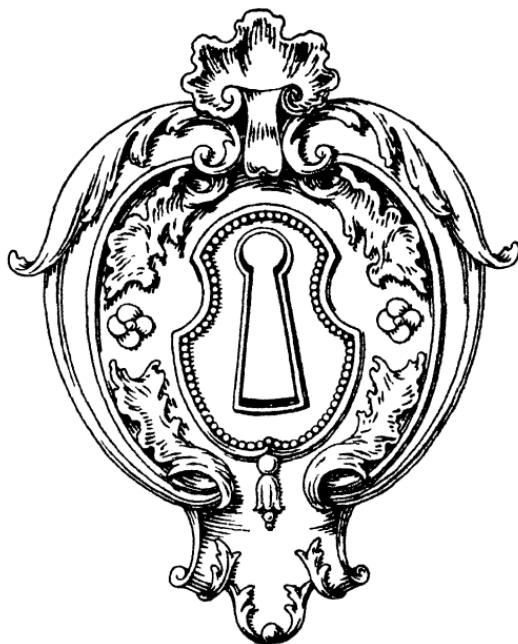
"We'll baptise him, we'll baptise him," said the Kerkabon lady to the Prior. "You shall have the honour, my dear brother. I'm absolutely fixed on being his godmother. Father Saint Yves shall stand godfather : it will be a brilliant ceremony : everyone will talk about it all over Lower Brittany, and that will do us endless credit."

All the assembled company seconded the mistress of the house. "We'll baptise him!" cried all the guests. "We'll baptise him!"

The Simple Soul replied that in England people were allowed to live as they pleased. He said that the proposal did not please him in the least, and that the law of the Hurons was at least as good as the law of the Low-

Bretons. Finally he announced that he was leaving on the following day. The bottle of Barbadoes water was finished, and everyone went to bed.

When the Simple Soul had been taken to his room, Mademoiselle Kerkabon and her friend Mademoiselle Saint Yves could not resist having a peep through the big keyhole to see how a Huron slept. They saw that he had spread the blanket on the floor and that he was lying in the most beautiful attitude in the world.





CHAPTER II *THE HURON, CALLED THE SIMPLE SOUL, RECOGNISED BY HIS RELATIONS*

THE Simple Soul, as was his habit, woke with the sun, at cock-crow, what in England and Huronia is called "the trumpeter of the dawn." He was not like those well-bred people who linger in a lazy bed until the sun has completed half its journey, who can neither sleep nor get up, who lose so many precious hours in that state intermediate between life and death, and who are always complaining how short life is.

He had already covered two or three leagues, and had already shot thirty head of game, when on his return he found the Prior of Our Lady of the Mountain and his discreet sister walking in the garden in their night-caps. He gave them the result of his hunting, and taking from his shirt a sort of little talisman that he always wore round his neck begged their acceptance of it in return for the kind reception they had given him. "It's the most precious thing I have," he told them, "and I have been assured I should always be happy so long as I carried that bauble on me: I give it to you so that you may always be happy."

The Prior and the lady smiled gently at the Simple Soul's ingenuousness. The present consisted of two

portraits, badly enough done, joined together with a very greasy thong.

Mademoiselle Kerkabon asked him if there were any painters in Huronia.

"No," said the Simple Soul, "that rare and precious object came from my foster-mother. Her husband acquired it by right of conquest, while despoiling some French Canadians who had made war on us: that's all I know about it."

The Prior studied the portraits attentively; he changed colour, was upset, his hands trembled: "By Our Lady of the Mountain," he cried, "I believe these are the faces of my brother the captain and his wife!"

Mademoiselle studied them with equal emotion, and came to the same conclusion. Both were struck in a heap with astonishment, joy and sorrow all intermingled. Both of them grew sad, wept, their hearts palpitating, uttered loud cries, snatched the portraits from each other twenty times a second. With their eyes they devoured the portraits and the Huron: one after the other, and both together, they asked him where, when and how these miniatures had fallen into his foster-mother's hands. They compared notes, calculated how long it was since the captain's departure, remembered having had news that he had been right into the land of the Hurons, and that from that time they had had no word of him.

The Simple Soul had told them he had known neither his father nor his mother. The Prior, who was an intelligent man, noticed that the Simple Soul had a little beard; he knew very well that the Hurons have none. "There is down on his chin, he must be the son of a European. My brother and my sister-in-law were not seen after the expedition against the Hurons in 1669: at that time my nephew would be a baby at the breast: the Huron foster-mother saved his life and acted like a real mother to him." At last, after a hundred questions and a hundred replies, the Prior and his sister concluded

that the Huron was their own nephew. With tears in their eyes they kissed him ; and the Simple Soul laughed, entirely unable to persuade himself that a Huron could be the nephew of a Low-Breton Prior.

All the guests came downstairs. Mr. Saint Yves, who was a great physiognomist, compared the two portraits with the Simple Soul's face, and very ingeniously distinguished that he had his mother's eyes, the forehead and nose of the late Captain Kerkabon, and cheeks resembling those of both.

Mademoiselle Saint Yves, who had never seen the father or the mother, was certain the Simple Soul was exactly like them. The whole crowd marvelled at the ways of Providence and at the concatenation of events in this world. In the end everyone was so certain, so convinced of the extraction of the Simple Soul that he himself consented to accept the Prior as uncle, saying that he was just as happy to be the Prior's nephew as another's.

The company went into the Church of Our Lady of the Mountain to render glory to God, while the Huron, completely indifferent, amused himself in the house with drinking. The Englishmen who had brought him, and were ready to set sail, came to tell him it was time to depart.

“ It's quite clear you haven't just found your uncles and aunts,” he said to them ; “ I'm staying here. Go back to Plymouth. I give you all my goods and chattels ; I've no more need of anything in the world now that I'm a Prior's nephew.” The Englishmen set sail, caring precious little whether the Simple Soul had relations in Lower Brittany or not.

When the uncle, the aunt and the guests had sung the Te Deum ; when the bailie had once more overwhelmed the Simple Soul with questions ; when every word that could be engendered by amazement, joy and affection had been uttered, the Prior of the Mountain and Father

Saint Yves determined to baptise the Simple Soul as quickly as possible. But dealing with a big Huron of twenty-two is not the same as dealing with a child who is regenerated without knowing anything about it. He had to have some instruction, and that seemed difficult, for Father Saint Yves assumed that a man who was not born in France could not have any common sense.

The Prior observed to the company that even if Mr. Simple Soul, his nephew, had not had the good fortune to be born in Lower Brittany, he had none the less wit, as could be judged from his replies, and that nature had certainly favoured him as much on his father's as on his mother's side.

They first asked him if he had ever read any books. He said that he had read Rabelais in an English translation, and a few scraps of Shakespeare, which he knew by heart; that he had found these books in the captain's cabin on the ship that had brought him from America to Plymouth, and that he was very glad of it. The bailie did not fail to interrogate him on these books.

"I confess I tried to guess at the meaning of some of it, and that I didn't understand the rest," answered the Simple Soul.

At these words Father Saint Yves observed that that was how he had always read, and that most men rarely read in any other fashion. "You have read the Bible, of course?" he said to the Huron.

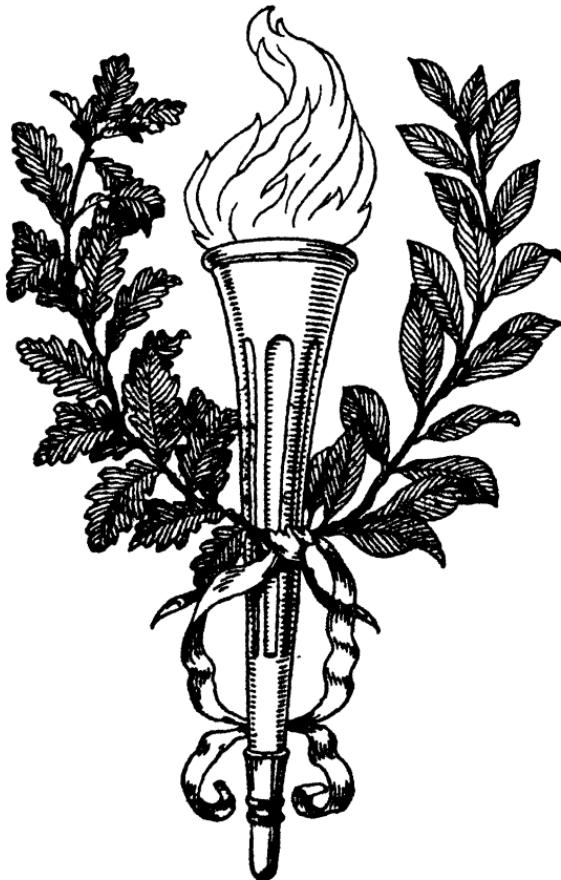
"Not a word of it, Father. It wasn't among my captain's books. I have never even heard of it."

"That's just like those cursed English," cried Mademoiselle Kerkabon. "They make more fuss over a bit of Shakespeare, a plum-pudding and a bottle of rum than they do over the Pentateuch. And they've never converted anyone in America either. Without any doubt they are God's accursed. We shall take Jamaica and Virginia from them before very long."

Whatever the facts may be, the most skilful tailor in

St. Malo was fetched in order to fit out the Simple Soul from head to toe. The company broke up ; the bailie went to pose his questions elsewhere. Mademoiselle Saint Yves, on leaving, turned round several times to look at the Simple Soul, and he made her deeper bows than he had ever before made to anyone in his life.

The bailie, before saying good-bye, introduced to Mademoiselle Saint Yves his great ninny of a son, who had just left college, but she hardly looked at him, so occupied was she with the Huron's politeness.





CHAPTER III *THE HURON, CALLED THE SIMPLE SOUL, CONVERTED*

I Prior, seeing that he was growing old and that God had sent him a nephew as a solace in his declining years, took it into his head that he might resign his living if he succeeded in baptising his nephew and getting him to take holy orders. The Simple Soul had an excellent memory. His sturdy Low-Breton constitution, fortified by the Canadian climate, had given him so strong a head that he hardly felt a blow on it, and never forgot a fact that was graved in it: what he had once learned was never effaced. His understanding was all the livelier and brighter inasmuch as his childhood had not been burdened with the foolish futilities that afflict ours: his brain received unprejudiced impressions. The Prior resolved finally to make him read the New Testament. The Simple Soul devoured it with great delight, but as he had no knowledge of either the time or the place where the adventures narrated in this book happened, he thought the setting was naturally in Lower Brittany; and he swore that if ever he met Caiaphas and Pilate he would cut off those rascals' ears and noses.

His uncle, charmed with his aptitude, set him right in no time and praised his zeal, but told him that this zeal was wasted, seeing that those people had been dead

about sixteen hundred and ninety years. The Simple Soul soon knew nearly the whole book by heart. Some of the objections he raised gave the Prior great trouble and often forced him to consult with Father Saint Yves, who, not knowing what to reply, sent for a Low-Breton Jesuit to complete the Huron's conversion.

Finally God's grace accomplished its work, and the Simple Soul promised to become a Christian. He had no doubt he would have to begin by being circumcised, "for," said he, "in the book you made me read I did not come across one person who had not been; it's quite clear I must sacrifice my foreskin; the sooner the better." Without more ado he sent for the village surgeon and asked him to perform the operation, counting that once the thing was done Mademoiselle Kerkabon and all the company would be vastly delighted. The sawbones, who had not performed such an operation before, acquainted the family with his inexperience. They burst into loud cries. The good dame Kerkabon trembled lest her nephew, who seemed resolved and in a hurry, might not perform the operation himself very clumsily, with sad results of natural interest to good, kind-hearted ladies.

The Prior corrected the Huron's ideas; he pointed out that circumcision was no longer fashionable, that baptism was much less painful and more salutary, that the law of grace was not like the law of rigour. The Simple Soul, who had plenty of good sense and equity, argued, but admitted his error; which is rare enough in Europe among persons who argue; he finished by promising to be baptised when the Prior wished.

First of all he had to be confessed, and that was the most difficult part of it. The Simple Soul always carried in his pocket the book his uncle had given him. He could not find in it that a single one of the apostles had been confessed, and that made him very stubborn. The Prior shut him up by showing him in the Epistle of St.

James the Less those words which have caused so much trouble to heretics—"Confess your faults one to another." The Huron said no more and confessed to a Recollet. When he had finished, he pulled the Recollet out of the confessional, seized him with his strong hand, put himself in the Recollet's place, and made the friar go down on his knees. "Come along, my friend," he said, "'Confess your faults to one another.' I've told you all my sins, you shan't leave here until you've told me yours." With these words he pushed his broad knee into his opponent's chest. The Recollet's shrieks made the church re-echo. At the noise everyone rushed to the confessional, where they saw the novice pommelling the monk in the name of St. James the Less. The joy of baptising a Low-Breton, Huron and Englishman was so great that these little eccentricities were passed over. Many theologians even came to the opinion that confession was unnecessary, seeing that baptism covered everything.

A day was fixed with the Bishop of St. Malo, who, flattered as may be imagined at baptising a Huron, arrived in a gaudy coach followed by his clergy. Mademoiselle Saint Yves put on her best frock and sent to St. Malo for a hairdresser, so that she might shine at the ceremony. The inquisitive bailie came in great haste with all the rest of the countryside. The church was beautifully decorated. But when the moment came to lead the Huron to the baptismal font, he was nowhere to be found.

The uncle and the aunt looked for him everywhere. Perhaps he had gone hunting, as was his habit. All the guests went off to search the woods and neighbouring villages: no sign of the Huron.

It was feared he had returned to England, as someone remembered hearing him say he liked that country very much. The Prior and his sister had an idea that nobody was ever baptised in England, and they trembled for

their nephew's soul. The Bishop was mortified and prepared to go back home. The Prior and Father Saint Yves were in despair. The bailie questioned all the passers-by with his habitual gravity. Mademoiselle Kerkabon wept. Mademoiselle Saint Yves did not weep, but uttered long sighs that seemed to bear witness to her taste for the seven sacraments. These two walked sadly along by the willows and reeds on the bank of the little river Rence. Suddenly they saw a form in the middle of the stream ; it was nearly white and had its hands crossed on its breast. Both the ladies uttered a loud cry, and turned their heads away. But curiosity soon overcame all other considerations, and they slipped quietly among the reeds. When they had made certain they could not be seen they set about investigating the phenomenon.





CHAPTER IV

THE SIMPLE SOUL BAPTISED



HE Prior and Father Saint Yves rushed up and asked the Simple Soul what he was doing in the river.

“What a question! I’m waiting to be baptised. I’ve already been an hour up to my neck in the water, and I don’t think it’s at all nice of you to let me get chilled like this.”

“My dear nephew,” said the Prior gently, “that’s not how we baptise people in Lower Brittany. Put on your clothes and come along with us.”

Mademoiselle Saint Yves, hearing these words, whispered to her companion—“Do you think he is going to put on his clothes again so soon?”

Meanwhile the Huron was retorting—“You won’t catch me this time as you did the last; I’ve been studying since then, and I’m quite certain there’s no other way of baptising. Queen Candace’s eunuch was baptised in a stream; I defy you to show me in the book you gave me that there ever was another way. If I can’t be baptised in the river, I won’t be baptised at all.” In vain did they point out that customs had changed. The Simple Soul was obstinate, for he was Breton and Huron. He came back time after time to Queen Candace’s eunuch, and although both his aunt and Mademoiselle Saint Yves, who had watched him from among the willows,

would have been quite in the right to tell him it was not becoming for him to mention such a man, yet they said nothing, so discreet were they. Even the Bishop came to speak to him (and that is a great deal), but he accomplished nothing : the Huron argued with the Bishop.

“ Show me,” said the Huron, “ in the book my uncle gave me, a single man who wasn’t baptised in the river, and I’ll do all you ask.”

The aunt, in despair, had noticed that the first time her nephew had bowed he had done so much more deeply to Mademoiselle Saint Yves than to anyone else in the company, and that further he had not even greeted My Lord Bishop with the respect and heartiness mingled he had shown to this beautiful girl. In her great embarrassment she took it on herself to speak to the young lady, and begged her to use her influence to induce the Huron to be baptised in the same way as the Bretons ; for she did not believe her nephew could ever be a Christian if he persisted in his determination to be baptised in running water.

Mademoiselle Saint Yves flushed with the secret pleasure she felt at being charged with so important a mission. She modestly drew near the Simple Soul, and taking his hand with perfect dignity—“ Won’t you do something for me ? ” she asked, dropping her eyes as she spoke and raising them again with a charm that stirred the Huron’s heart.

“ For you, anything you ask, anything you command,” he answered. “ Baptism by fire, water or blood, I refuse you nothing.”

Mademoiselle Saint Yves had the honour of achieving with two words what all the Prior’s efforts, all the bailie’s repeated questions, even all the Bishop’s arguments had failed to achieve. She was conscious of her triumph, but she was unconscious as yet of its extent.

The baptism was administered and received with all possible pomp, propriety and pleasure. The aunt and

uncle ceded to Father Saint Yves and his sister the honour of being godfather and godmother. Mademoiselle Saint Yves beamed with delight at being a godmother. She did not know to what this high title subjected her ; she accepted the honour in ignorance of its fatal consequences.

As there has never been a great ceremony that was not followed by a great banquet, everyone sat down to table when the baptism was over. The wits of Lower Brittany say that wine should never be baptised. The prior said that wine, according to Solomon, maketh glad the heart of man. The Bishop added that the patriarch Judah had to bind his foal to the vine and wash his clothes in the blood of grapes, and that he was very sorry one could not do as much in Lower Brittany, to which God had denied vines. Everyone tried to be humorous over the Simple Soul's baptism, and to make cunning little jokes at his godmother's expense. The bailie, inquisitive as ever, asked the Huron if he would be faithful to his vows.

"How do you imagine I could break my word," answered the Huron, "seeing that I have given it into the hands of Mademoiselle Saint Yves ?"

The Huron grew excited ; he drank deeply to his godmother's health. "If I had been baptised by your hand," he said, "I am sure the cold water they poured on my neck would have burned me."

The bailie thought this remark too poetical, because he was unaware how freely allegory is used in Canada. But the godmother was vastly pleased with it.

The newly-baptised had received the name of Hercules. The Bishop of St. Malo kept on asking what sort of a patron saint he was, as he had never heard of him. The Jesuit, who was a very learned man, replied that Hercules was a saint who had performed twelve miracles. There was a thirteenth which was worth the twelve others, but of which it did not become a Jesuit to speak. He re-

ferred to that of having in a single night turned fifty damsels into dames. A joker who was present applauded this miracle energetically. All the ladies dropped their eyes and judged from the Simple Soul's countenance that he was worthy of the saint whose name he bore.





CHAPTER V

THE SIMPLE SOUL IN LOVE

IT must be confessed that from the time of the baptism and the supper Mademoiselle Saint Yves wished ardently that the Bishop would let her participate with Mr. Hercules Simple Soul in another beautiful sacrament. As, however, she was well-bred and very modest, she dared not acknowledge to herself her tender sentiments in their entirety, but if a look, a word, a gesture, a thought escaped her she hid them in an infinitely adorable veil of virgin bashfulness. She was ardent, gentle and discreet.

As soon as the Bishop had left, the Simple Soul and Mademoiselle Saint Yves came across each other without realising they were looking for one another. They spoke to each other without having an idea of what they were going to talk about. The Simple Soul said first of all that he loved her with all his heart, and that the lovely Abacaba, whom he had raved about in his own country, was nowhere near her equal. Mademoiselle answered with her habitual modesty that he must speak as quickly as possible to his uncle, the Prior, and to his aunt, and that on her side she would drop a hint to her brother, Father Saint Yves, and that she flattered herself there would be common consent.

The Simple Soul answered her that he did not need anyone's consent, that to him it seemed absolutely ridiculous to go and ask other people what they ought to do,

that when two people were agreed on a thing they had no need of a third to reconcile them. "I don't ask anybody," he said, "when I want to eat or hunt or sleep: I am aware that in love it's not a bad idea to have the consent of the person one desires, but as I am in love with neither my uncle nor my aunt, it's not their approval I shall ask in this matter; and if you take my advice you'll dispense with Father Saint Yves as well."

As may be imagined, the beautiful Bretonne used all her subtlety of wit to bring her Huron within the pale of the proprieties. She even worked herself into a temper, and soon calmed down. Indeed no one knows how this conversation would have finished had not night come on bringing Father Saint Yves with it in search of his sister to return to the abbey. The Simple Soul let his uncle and aunt, who were rather tired after the ceremony and long dinner, go to bed. He himself spent part of the night writing verses to his beloved in the Huron language; for it must be remembered there is no land on earth where love has not made lovers poets.

On the following day after lunch, in the presence of Mademoiselle Kerkabon, who was quite affected, his uncle spoke to him. "God be praised," he said, "that you have the honour, my dear nephew, of being Christian and Low-Breton! But that is not enough; I am growing old, my brother left only a little bit of land, a mere trifl; I have a nice priory; if you will but become a subdeacon, as I hope and trust, I will resign my living, and you shall live very comfortably after comforting me in my old age."

"Good luck to you, uncle," answered the Simple Soul. "Live as long as you can. I don't know what being a subdeacon or resigning means; but everything will please me provided I can have Mademoiselle Saint Yves."

"Good Heavens, nephew! What are you talking about? Do you love this beautiful girl madly?"

"Yes, uncle."

"My poor nephew, you cannot possibly marry her."

"On the contrary, it's very possible, uncle. Not only did she squeeze my hand when she left me, but she promised me she would ask me in marriage ; and I shall certainly marry her."

"I tell you it is impossible, she is your godmother. It is a terrible sin for a godmother to squeeze her godson's hand : it is forbidden to marry one's godmother ; the laws of both God and man oppose it."

"Zounds, uncle ! You're laughing at me : why should it be forbidden to marry one's godmother when she's young and pretty ? In the book you gave me I never saw anything about it's being wicked to marry girls who have helped people to be baptised. Every day here I see you do a multitude of things that aren't in your book, and don't do ever so many things that are : I must tell you it surprises and annoys me. If I am deprived of the lovely Saint Yves on the pretext of my baptism, I warn you I'll carry her off and have myself unbaptised."

The Prior was stupefied ; his sister wept. "My dear brother," she said, "our nephew must not be allowed to damn his soul. Our Holy Father the Pope can give him dispensation, and then he can be Christianly happy with the girl he loves."

The Simple Soul kissed his aunt. "Who, then," he asked, "is this charming man who with so much kindness befriends boys and girls in their love affairs ? I would like to have a word with him by and by."

They explained to him what the Pope was, and the Simple Soul was more astonished than ever. "There's not a word of all that in your book, my dear uncle," he said. "I have travelled, I know the sea. Here we are on the Atlantic coast, and you think I'm going to leave Mademoiselle Saint Yves to go and ask permission to love her from a man who lives on the Mediterranean, four hundred leagues away, and whose language I don't understand at all ! It's incomprehensible, ridiculous ! I'm going right away to see Father Saint Yves who lives only

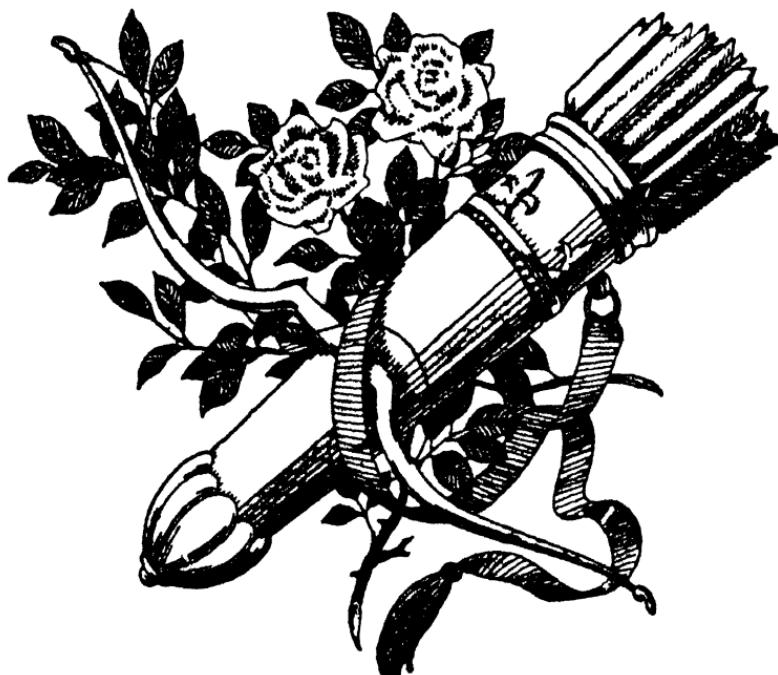
a league off, and I tell you I shall marry my mistress in the course of the day."

While he was still speaking, the bailie came in and, as was his habit, asked where he was going.

"I'm off to get married," said the Simple Soul as he ran out of the house. In a quarter of an hour he had already reached the home of his dear and lovely Low-Bretonne, who was still sleeping.

"Brother," sighed Mademoiselle Kerkabon, "you will never make a subdeacon of our nephew."

The bailie was very ill-content with his visit, for he maintained that his son should marry Mademoiselle Saint Yves: and this son was even more silly and intolerable than his father.





CHAPTER VI *THE SIMPLE SOUL RUSHES TO HIS MISTRESS'S ROOM AND GROWS FURIOUS*

ARDLY had the Simple Soul reached the house than, having asked an old servant where her mistress's room was, he had pushed open the badly closed door and rushed towards the bed. Mademoiselle Saint Yves started up out of her sleep. "What!" she cried. "It's you! It's you! Stop, stop! what are you doing?"

"I'm marrying you," he answered. And indeed he would have married her had not she struggled in accordance with the ideas of decency possessed by all educated persons.

The Simple Soul could not take a joke; he thought all this affectation very impertinent. "That's not how Mademoiselle Abacaba, my first mistress, treated me; it's not honest, you know; you promised to marry me, and now you don't want to; that's breaking the cardinal laws of honour; I'll teach you to keep to your word; I'll bring you back into the path of virtue."

The Simple Soul was possessor of a dauntless, masculine force, worthy of Hercules his patron saint, whose name he had received at his baptism; this he proceeded to exercise to the full, when in answer to the piercing cries of the lady, whose force was more discreet, the wise Father Saint Yves came rushing up, accompanied by the

housekeeper, an aged and devoted servant and the parish priest. At sight of them the assailant's courage was curbed.

"Good God, my dear neighbour!" cried the Father.
"What are you doing there?"

"My duty," answered the young man. "I am fulfilling a promise I hold sacred."

Mademoiselle Saint Yves put herself in order blushing. The Simple Soul was taken away into another room. The Father pointed out the enormity of his action. The Simple Soul defended himself on the privileges of the law of nature, which he understood perfectly. The Father tried to prove that man-made law must prevail, and that if it were not for the conventions between men the law of nature would nearly always be nothing but natural brigandage. "We must have," he continued, "lawyers, priests, witnesses, contracts, licences."

The Simple Soul answered him with the observation savages have always made—"You must be very dis honourable people to need to take all these precautions with one another."

The Father had some difficulty in resolving this problem. "I admit," he said, "we have many rogues and unstable people among us, and there would be as many among the Hurons if they were gathered together in a large town, but there are a few wise, honest, enlightened souls, and these are the men who have made the laws. The better a man is, the more must he submit and give an example to the vicious, who respect a brake put by virtue on itself."

This reply struck the Simple Soul. It has already been remarked that he had a just mind. Father Saint Yves calmed him down with flattering phrases and gave him fresh hope: those are the two traps that ensnare men of both hemispheres; and even let him see Mademoiselle Saint Yves, when she had dressed herself. Everything passed with the greatest decorum, but, de-



Mad

Yves started up

11

spite all these good manners, Simple Soul Hercules' sparkling eyes always made his mistress lower hers, and the rest of the company tremble.

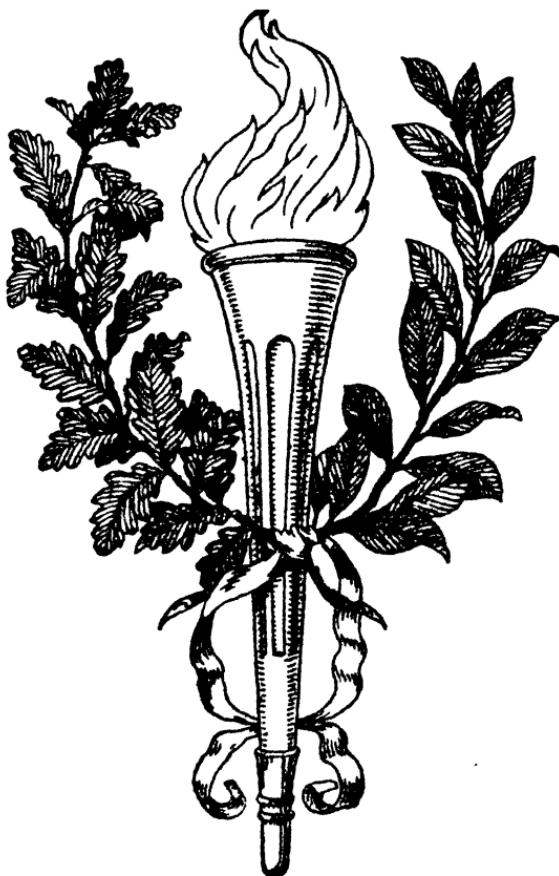
There was extreme difficulty in sending him back to his relatives, and once more lovely Mademoiselle's influence had to be called into service. The more she felt her power over him, the more she loved him. She made him go away, and then was very sad at what she had done. When at last he had gone, the Father, who was not only Mademoiselle Saint Yves' elder brother, but also her guardian, made up his mind to screen his ward from the explosive ardour of this terrible lover. He set off to consult the bailie, who, still designing that his son should have the Father's sister, advised him to put the poor girl in a convent. It was a terrible blow ; even an apathetic girl would scream at the idea of going into a convent, but for a woman who was in love, and whose love was as discreet as it was ardent . . . it was enough to make her despair.

The Simple Soul on his return to the Priory related everything that had passed with his usual *naïveté*. Here he heard the same remonstrances, and although they had some effect on his mind they had none on his senses. On the morrow when he wanted to return to his mistress's home to reason with her on the law of nature and the law of convention, the bailie told him with insolent joy that she was in a convent.

“ Oh, well,” answered the Simple Soul, “ I will go and reason with her in the convent.”

“ That can't be done,” said the bailie, and he explained to the young man very long-windedly just what a convent was, that this word comes from the Latin, *conventus*, which means an assembly ; and the Huron could not understand why he could not be admitted in this assembly. As soon as he learned that this assembly was a sort of prison where girls were imprisoned, a loathsome thing, unknown among the Hurons and the English, he became

as mad as was Hercules his patron saint when Eurytes, King of Oechalia, no less cruel than Father Saint Yves, refused him Iola his daughter, who was no less lovely than the Father's sister. He wanted to set fire to the convent and carry off his mistress, or burn to death with her. Mademoiselle Kerkabon was terrified and renounced more than ever her hopes of seeing her nephew subdeacon. With tears in her eyes she said that since his baptism he had the devil in him.





CHAPTER VII

THE SIMPLE SOUL REPULSES THE ENGLISH

ITHE Simple Soul, plunged in sombre and profound melancholy, wandered towards the seashore, his double-barrelled gun on his shoulder, his big cutlass at his side. From time to time he shot at some birds, and was often tempted to shoot himself ; but he was still fond of life because of Mademoiselle Saint Yves. Sometimes he cursed his aunt, uncle, all Lower Brittany and his baptism ; at others he blessed them for that they had introduced him to the woman he loved. He resolved to burn the convent down, and then stopped dead for fear of burning his mistress. The waves of the Channel are not in greater ferment from the east and west wind than was his heart from the multitude of contradictory emotions that assailed him.

He was walking along with great strides, without knowing where he was going, when he heard the sound of a drum. He saw in the distance quite a crowd, of which one half was running towards the shore and the other was taking to flight.

A thousand cries rose from all sides ; curiosity and courage sent him off at once towards the spot whence the clamour came ; in four bounds he was there. The commandant of militia who had supped with him at the

Priory recognised him at once and ran to him with open arms. "It's the Simple Soul," he cried; "he'll fight for us." And the soldiers, who were dying of fright, plucked up courage and joined in the cry—"It's the Simple Soul! It's the Simple Soul!"

"What's all the trouble about?" asked the Simple Soul. "Why are you so scared? Have your mistresses been put in convents?"

To which a hundred bewildered voices cried—"Don't you see the English coming?"

"Well, what about it?" said the Huron. "The English are very fine people; they never wanted to make me a subdeacon; they never carried my mistress off."

The commandant made him understand that the English had come to plunder the Abbey of the Mountain, drink his uncle's wine, and maybe carry off Mademoiselle Saint Yves; that the little ship that brought him to Brittany had come but to explore the coast; that the English were committing hostile acts without declaring war on the King of France, and that the province was in danger.

"Oh, that's it, is it? They are transgressing the law of nature! leave it to me! I've lived among them a long time, I speak their language, I'll talk to them; I don't think their intentions can be so very bad."

During this conversation the English fleet was drawing near. The Huron jumped into a little boat, went aboard the flagship and asked if it was true they had come to lay the country waste without honourably declaring war. The admiral and everyone else on board burst out laughing, made him drink some punch and sent him back again.

The Simple Soul was nettled and thought of nothing but fighting against his former friends, for his compatriots and the Prior. The gentry of the neighbourhood came up quickly from everywhere, and he joined them. They had a few cannon; he loaded, pointed and fired them



The English repulsed

one after the other. The English came ashore ; he rushed on them and killed three himself, wounding even the admiral who had laughed at him. His bravery revived the courage of the militia ; the English clambered aboard again, and the whole coast re-echoed with the shouts of victory, "Long live the King ! long live the Simple Soul ! " Everyone embraced him and hastened to staunch the blood from the numerous slight wounds he had received. "If Mademoiselle Saint Yves were here," he said, "she would put me a compress on."

The bailie, who had hidden in his cellar during the fight, came with the others to congratulate him. But he was very surprised to hear Hercules Simple Soul say to a dozen willing young fellows who surrounded him : "My friends, to have delivered the Abbey of the Mountain is nothing, we have to deliver a girl." All the hot-headed youths took fire at these words. Already they were following him in a crowd, and running towards the convent. If the bailie had not at once warned the commandant, and if the happy troop had not been overtaken, all would have been over. The Simple Soul was brought back to his uncle and aunt, who bathed him in affectionate tears.

"I can see quite clearly that you will never be either a subdeacon or a prior," said his uncle. "You will be an even braver officer than my brother, and just as poverty-stricken."

Mademoiselle Kerkabon still shed tears over him as she kissed him and said : "He will get himself killed as my brother did ; it is much better he should be a subdeacon."

During the fight, the Simple Soul had picked up a fat purse bulging with guineas, which the admiral probably had let fall. With this purse he had no doubts as to his ability to buy all Lower Brittany, and above all to make Mademoiselle Saint Yves a lady of fashion. Everyone exhorted him to make the journey to Versailles in order

to receive the reward for his services. The commandant and all the chief officers overwhelmed him with testimonials. The aunt and uncle approved of their nephew's journey. He should be presented to the king without difficulty; that alone would give him great prestige in the province. These two good people added to the English purse a considerable gift from their savings. Said the Simple Soul to himself—"When I see the king I shall ask him to grant me the hand of Mademoiselle Saint Yves in marriage, and he will surely not refuse me." He set off, therefore, amid the cheers of the whole canton, stifled with kisses, bathed in his aunt's tears, blessed by his uncle, and trusting that the beautiful Saint Yves would watch over the success of his mission.





CHAPTER VIII *THE SIMPLE SOUL GOES TO COURT.* *ON THE ROAD HE SUPS WITH SOME HUGUENOTS*

ITHE Simple Soul took coach by the Saumur road, because at that time there was no other conveyance. He was astonished to see the town of Saumur almost deserted, and many families removing. He was told that six years before Saumur had a population of fifteen thousand souls, and that at present there were not six thousand. He did not fail to mention it at supper in his hostelry. There were a number of Protestants at the table ; some were complaining bitterly, others were shaking with fury, still others with tears in their eyes were saying—*Nos dulcia linquimus arva, nos patriam fugimus.* The Simple Soul did not understand Latin and asked the meaning of these words, which signify—“We abandon our sweet pastures, we flee from our fatherland.”

“And why do you flee from your fatherland, gentlemen ?”

“It is because we are required to recognise the Pope.”

“And why don’t you recognise him ? Haven’t you then any godmothers you want to marry ? I’ve been told he’s the man who gives permission.”

“Ah ! the Pope says he is master of the domains of kings.”

“But what is your profession, gentlemen ?”

“ We are mostly clothmakers and merchants.”

“ If your Pope said he was master of your cloths and your factories you would be right enough not to recognise him, but as regards the kings, that’s their affair ; what business is it of yours ? ”

Then a short man in black spoke up and very learnedly explained the company’s grievances. He talked about the revocation of the Edict of Nantes so forcefully, he deplored with so much pathos the fate of fifty thousand fugitive families and fifty thousand others converted by the dragoons, that the Simple Soul in his turn started to cry. “ How comes it then,” he asked, “ that such a great king, whose glory extends right to the land of the Hurons, should deprive himself in this way of so many hearts which would have loved him, and so many arms which would have served him ? ”

“ Like other great kings, he has been misled,” answered the dark man. “ He was led to believe that he had but to say the word and all men would think as he thinks ; that he would make us change our religion as Lulli his musician changes the scenery of his operas. Not only has he lost already five or six hundred thousand very useful subjects, but he has made enemies of them, and King William who is at present master of England has made up several regiments of these same Frenchmen who would have fought for their own king.

“ Such a disaster is all the more amazing in that the reigning Pope, for whom Louis XIV is sacrificing a part of his people, is his declared enemy. They both of them have a quarrel dating back nine years, which has not been settled yet. So far has the quarrel gone that France has hopes of at last throwing off the yoke that has made her subject for so many centuries to this foreigner, and above all of ridding herself of the necessity of paying him any more money, which in this world’s affairs is the prime cause of action. It seems quite clear that someone has misled this great king both as regards his own interests

as well as regards the extent of his power, and that his natural magnanimity has been marred."

The Simple Soul, more and more saddened, asked what these Frenchmen were who had misled in this way a monarch so dear to the Hurons. "They are Jesuits," returned the other, "and above all it is Father La Chaise, His Majesty's confessor. We must hope that God will punish them for it one day, and that they will be driven out as we are. Is there a misfortune equal to ours? Monsieur de Louvois sends us Jesuits and dragoons on all sides."

"Oh, well, gentlemen," said the Simple Soul, who could not contain himself any longer, "I am on my way to Versailles to receive the reward for my services; I will speak to Monsieur de Louvois: I'm told it's he who makes wars from his closet. I will see the king and let him know the truth; it's impossible not to believe the truth when one is shown it. I shall be back soon to marry Mademoiselle Saint Yves, and I invite you to the wedding."

These good people took him for a great lord travelling *incognito*. Some of them took him for the king's fool.

But at the table there was a Jesuit in disguise, who acted as spy to the Reverend Father La Chaise. He related everything, and Father La Chaise informed Master de Louvois. The spy wrote. The Simple Soul and the letter arrived at Versailles almost at the same time.





CHAPTER IX *ARRIVAL OF THE SIMPLE SOUL AT VERSAILLES. HIS RECEPTION AT COURT*



HE Simple Soul travelled by chamber-pot (2) and landed in the kitchen courtyard. He asked the chairmen when he could see the king. The chairmen laughed in his face, just as the admiral had done. He treated them in the same way and thrashed them ; they wanted to return the compliment and the scene would have been bloody had not a lifeguard, a Breton nobleman, passed and driven the rabble off. "Sir," said the traveller, "you seem to me a gallant man ; I am the nephew of the Prior of Our Lady of the Mountain ; I have killed some Englishmen, I come to speak with the king ; I shall be obliged if you will take me to his room."

The lifeguard, delighted at coming across a bravo from his own part of the country who did not seem to know the customs of the court, told him that was not the way to speak with the king, and that he must be introduced by My Lord Louvois.

"All right ! Take me to My Lord Louvois at once ; he will introduce me to the king doubtless."

"That's still more difficult," answered the lifeguard. "It's harder to speak with My Lord Louvois than it is to speak with His Majesty. I will take you to see Mr. Alexandre, the Minister of War's chief clerk ; it's the same as speaking to the minister."

They therefore went to see Mr. Alexandre the chief clerk, but they could not be allowed in as he was talking business with a lady of the court, and had given instructions that no one was to enter.

"Oh, well," said the lifeguard, "we shan't lose anything by that; let's go and see Mr. Alexandre's chief clerk; it's the same thing as speaking to Mr. Alexandre himself."

The Huron, quite bemused, followed him. They waited together in a small anteroom for half an hour.

"What is all this dilly-dallying?" asked the Simple Soul. "Is everyone invisible in this part of the world? Fighting the English in Lower Brittany is much easier than meeting people with whom one has business in Versailles." He relieved his boredom by telling his companion all about his love-affair. But the clock struck and recalled the lifeguard to his post. They promised to see each other again on the morrow, and the Simple Soul waited another half-hour in the anteroom, dreaming of Mademoiselle Saint Yves and pondering on the difficulty of speaking with kings and chief clerks.

Mr. Alexandre appeared at last. "Sir," said the Simple Soul, "if I had waited as long before driving the English back as you have made me wait for my audience, they would at this moment be laying Lower Brittany waste at their ease."

These words struck the clerk. "What do you want?" he asked the Breton at last.

"A reward," answered the other. "Here is my title," and he brought out all his testimonials.

The clerk read them and told him he would probably be accorded permission to buy a lieutenancy.

"What! I have to pay for having driven the English out? For the right of having myself killed for you I have to give money, while you stay here and peacefully give audiences? You must be joking. I want a troop of horse for nothing; I want the king to get Mademoiselle

Saint Yves out of the convent and give me her in marriage ; I want to speak to the king on behalf of the fifty thousand families I mean to give him back : in a word, I want to be useful. Let them use me and push me forward."

" What is your name, you who speak so haughtily ? "

" Ho, Ho ! " returned the Simple Soul, " so you haven't read my testimonials ? That's the way you treat people, is it ? My name is Hercules de Kerkabon ; I have been baptised, I lodge at the Blue Sundial, and I shall complain of you to the king."

The clerk concluded, like the people of Saumur, that he was not quite right in his head, and did not pay much attention to him.

On the same day, the Reverend Father La Chaise, confessor of Louis XIV, had received his spy's letter, accusing the Breton Kerkabon of being friendly in his heart towards the Huguenots and of condemning the conduct of the Jesuits. Monsieur de Louvois, for his part, had received a letter from the inquisitive bailie, depicting the Simple Soul as a scamp who wanted to burn down convents and kidnap virgins.

The Simple Soul, after walking in the gardens of Versailles, which bored him, and supping like a Huron and a Low-Breton, went to bed in the sweet hope of seeing the king on the morrow, of obtaining the hand of Mademoiselle Saint Yves in marriage, of having a troop of horse at the very least, and of stopping the persecution of the Huguenots. He was lulling himself to sleep with these gratifying thoughts when the watch came into his room, and first of all seized his double-barrelled gun and great sabre.

An inventory was made of the money he had on him, and he was hauled off to the castle that King Charles V, son of Jean II, had had built near the Rue Saint-Antoine at the Tournelles gate.

What was the Simple Soul's amazement on the way

there I leave you to imagine. He thought first of all he was dreaming. He remained in a torpor for a time, then suddenly overcome by a rage that doubled his strength, seized by the throat two of the warders who were with him in the coach, threw them out of the door, himself after them, dragging with him the third who was trying to hold him back. The effort exhausted him and he fell; he was bound and put back in the coach. "That's what one gains," he said, "by driving the English out of Lower Brittany! What would you say, lovely Saint Yves, if you saw me in this state?"

The coach arrived at last at his destined lodging-place. He was taken in silence to the room where he was to be imprisoned, just as a dead man is borne to the cemetery. This room was already occupied by an aged recluse from Port-Royal (3), named Gordon, who had been languishing there two years.

"Here you are," said the chief of the myrmidons, "I've brought you some company." The huge bolts were immediately drawn again on the thick door, which was covered with big bars. The two prisoners were cut off from the whole world.





CHAPTER X *THE SIMPLE SOUL SHUT UP IN THE BASTILLE WITH A JANSENIST*

MGORDON was a serene, fresh-complexioned old man, who had learned two great things: how to endure adversity, and how to comfort the unfortunate. He came towards his companion with a frank and sympathetic air, and embraced him. "Whoever you are," he said, "who come to share my tomb, be certain that I shall always forget my own troubles in order to soften your torture in this infernal abyss in which we are incarcerated. Let us worship the Providence that has brought us here, let us suffer calmly, and hope."

These words had on the Simple Soul the effect of those English drops (4) which bring a dying man back to life, and make him half-open his bemused eyes.

After the first greeting, Gordon, without urging him to relate the cause of his misfortune, inspired in him, by his gentle manner and by the interest two unfortunates take in each other, the desire to open his heart and divest himself of the burden that overwhelmed him. But the Huron could not guess what was the reason for his misadventure; it seemed to him an effect without a cause, and the good Gordon was equally amazed.

"God must intend you for great things," said the Jansenist to the Huron, "seeing that He has led you

from Lake Ontario to England and France, that He has caused you to be baptised in Lower Brittany, and that He has put you in here for the salvation of your soul."

"If you ask me," returned the Simple Soul, "I think the devil's the only one who's got mixed up in my fate. My compatriots in America would never have treated me with the barbarity I have experienced here ; they haven't a notion of such a thing. People call them 'savages' ; they are a rough good-hearted lot, and the men of this country are a pack of elegant scamps. I'm really very surprised to have come from another world in order to be locked up in this one with a priest ; but if I reflect on the vast number of men who leave one hemisphere to go and get killed in the other, or who are shipwrecked on the way or eaten by the fishes, well I don't see what gracious intentions God had for them."

Dinner was brought to them through a small grating. The conversation touched on Providence, on *lettres de cachet*, on the art of not succumbing to the afflictions that beset all men in this world. "I have been here two years," said the old man, "with no one to console me but my books and myself : not for one moment have I been out of temper."

"Ah, Mr. Gordon," cried the Simple Soul, "that's all very well ! but you're not in love with your god-mother. If you knew Mademoiselle Saint Yves you would be in despair." He could not restrain his tears, and when he had wept he felt a little less oppressed. "But," said he, "why are tears a relief ? I should have thought they would have had a contrary effect."

"My son," replied the good old man, "everything in us is material ; all the body's secretions are useful to it ; everything that relieves the body relieves the soul too : we are machines designed by Providence."

The Simple Soul, who had, as we have already remarked several times, a great intelligence, reflected profoundly on this idea, the germ of which he seemed to

have within him. He then asked his companion why his machine had been for two years behind four bolts.

“Through efficacious grace,” answered Gordon, “I pass for Jansenist: I knew Arnauld and Nicole; the Jesuits persecuted us. We believe that the Pope is only a bishop like any other; and that is why Father La Chaise obtained from the king his penitent an order to rob me, without any of the formalities of justice, of man’s most precious treasure—liberty.”

“That’s very strange,” observed the Simple Soul. “All the unhappy people I’ve ever met owe their unhappiness to the Pope. As for your efficacious grace, I avow I do not understand a word of it; but I do consider it a great act of grace that in my misfortune God should have made me find a man like you, who pours into my heart a comfort which I thought myself incapable of finding.”

Their conversation became more interesting and instructive each day. The captives’ souls clave to each other. The old man knew much, and the young man wanted to learn much. After a month he studied geometry, and devoured it eagerly. Gordon made him read Rohault’s natural philosophy which was still in fashion, and he had the intelligence to find nothing but equivocations in it. Then he read the first volume of “The Search for Truth.” This new light illumined his mind. “What!” he said, “our senses and our imagination deceive us as much as that! What! our ideas are not formed by the things around us, and we cannot give ourselves ideas!” When he had read the second volume he was no longer so content, and concluded that it is easier to destroy than to build.

His companion was astonished to hear an unread youth make this reflection, which is characteristic of a practised mind only, and formed a great idea of his intelligence, interesting himself in the youth still more. Some days later Gordon asked him: “What then is your opinion

about the soul, how do you think we receive our ideas, what is your view of our volition, of grace, of free-will ? ”

“ I haven’t any opinion,” returned the Simple Soul. “ If I think at all I conclude that we are dominated by the eternal Being, like the elements and the stars ; that He controls everything in us, that we are little cogs in an immense machine of which He is the soul ; that He acts in accordance with general laws and not with particular opinions ; that alone seems intelligible to me ; all the rest is for me a shadowy pit.”

“ But, my son, that would be making God the author of sin.”

“ But, my father, your efficacious grace would make God the father of sin also, for it is certain that all those who are refused this grace sin ; and is not he who delivers us into the hands of evil the author of evil ? ”

This simplicity of outlook embarrassed the good man very much. He felt that his efforts to drag himself out of the slough were in vain, and he piled up such a heap of words that seemed to make sense, but did not in the least (in the manner of the theory of predestination), that the Simple Soul felt quite sorry for him. This was obviously a question regarding the origin of good and evil, and here poor Gordon had to pass in review Pandora’s box, Ormuzd’s egg pierced by Ahriman, the enmity between Typhon and Osiris, and finally original sin. And both of them ran hither and thither in this pitch-black night without ever meeting. However, this romantic story of the soul distracted their attention from the contemplation of their own misery, and by a strange enchantment the crowd of calamities in the universe diminished their sense of their own troubles ; when the whole world was suffering they dared not pity themselves.

But in the peace of the night the image of the beautiful Saint Yves effaced from her lover’s mind all ideas of metaphysics and moral philosophy. He waked with his

eyes full of tears, and the aged Jansenist forgot his efficacious grace and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran (5) and Jansenius, in order to comfort a youth whom he believed to be in mortal sin.

After reading and arguing they spoke again of their adventures, and, after talking about them to no purpose, set to reading again, alone or together. The young man's intelligence ripened more and more. He would have gone far in mathematics especially, had it not been for the distractions offered by the thought of Mademoiselle Saint Yves.

He read all sorts of history, and was saddened. The world seemed to him too mischievous and miserable. In truth, history is but a picture of crimes and calamities. On these vast stages the crowd of peaceful, innocent men always disappear. The protagonists are but ambitious miscreants. History, it seems, is like Tragedy, which grows dull if it be not quickened by passion, crime and great adversity. Clio must be armed with a dagger, like Melpomene.

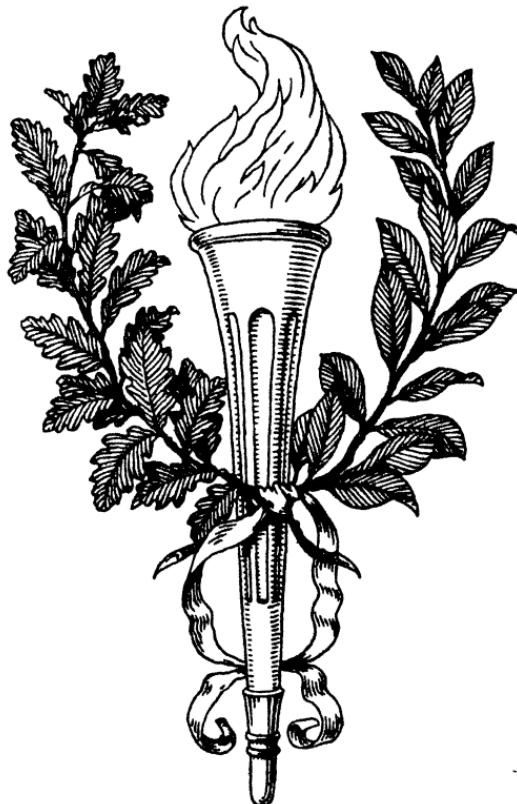
Although French history, like all other history, brims over with horror, it seemed to the Simple Soul so loathsome in its beginnings, so barren in its middle stages, so petty in short, even in the time of Henri IV, so perpetually nude of the records of great things, so alien to the grand discoveries that have made other nations illustrious, that he was forced to fight against boredom in order to read all these details of obscure disasters confined to one small corner of the world.

Gordon thought as he did, and both laughed for pity when they came to the sovereigns of Fezensac, Fesensaguet and Astarac (6). In fact, this study would be profitable only for their heirs, if they had any. The great centuries of the Roman Republic made him indifferent for a time to the rest of the world. The spectacle of Rome as conqueror and legislator of the nations filled his whole soul. He was thrilled by the contemplation of this people which

for seven hundred years was governed by enthusiasm for liberty and glory.

In this way days, weeks, months passed, and had he not been in love he would have thought himself happy in this abode of despair.

His natural good nature made him sad again when he thought of the Prior of Our Lady of the Mountain and his susceptible sister. "What will they think," he often said, "at not having any news of me? They'll think me an ungrateful wretch." This idea tormented him; he pitied those who loved him far more than he pitied himself.





CHAPTER XI

HOW THE SIMPLE SOUL RIPENED HIS GENIUS

THE soul is ennobled by reading, and comforted by an enlightened friend. Our captive enjoyed these two advantages, the existence of which he had not suspected before. "I am tempted," he said, "to believe in metamorphoses, for I have been transformed from a brute into a man." With part of his money which he was allowed to spend he got together a choice library. His friend encouraged him to commit his reflections to paper. This is what he wrote about ancient history :

"I fancy that the nations have long been like me, that they have improved themselves but very late, that for centuries they have been occupied only with the fleeting present, very little with the past, and never with the future. I have covered five or six hundred leagues in Canada and I have never found a single record of the past ; no one there has any idea of what his great-grandfather did. Is not that man's natural state ? The people of this continent seem to me superior to those of the other continent. For many centuries past they have broadened existence by art and knowledge. Is it because they have beards on their chins, and God has denied the Americans beards ? I do not think so, for I see that the Chinese have hardly any beard and yet have cultivated the arts

for more than four thousand years. Indeed, if they have records dating back four thousand years, the nation must have flourished for more than fifty centuries.

"I am struck particularly in China's ancient history by the fact that nearly everything there has an air of naturalness and likelihood. I admire the lack of the marvellous.

"Why have all the other nations given themselves fabulous origins? The old chroniclers of French History, who are not so very old, make the French come from one Francus, son of Hector: the Romans maintained they were descended from a Phrygian, although there was not one word in their language that had the least resemblance to the Phrygian language: the gods had dwelt ten thousand years in Egypt, and the devils in Scythia where they had engendered the Huns. Prior to Thucydides I see only romances similar to those of Amadis, and much less amusing. Everywhere there are apparitions, oracles, portents, spells and incantations, metamorphoses and interpreted dreams, that arrange the destinies of the greatest empires and the smallest states: here beasts that speak, there beasts that are worshipped, gods transformed into men, and men transformed into gods. Oh! if we must have fables, let those fables at least be emblematical of truth! I love philosophers' fables, I laugh at children's and I hate charlatans'."

One day he came across a history of the Emperor Justinian. He read in it that the apedeutes (7) of Constantinople had issued in very bad Greek a dictum against the greatest captain of the century, because this hero had said these words in the heat of conversation: "Truth shines by its own light, and minds cannot be enlightened by the flames of funeral pyres." The apedeutes maintained that this statement was heretical and savouring of heresy, and that the contrary axiom was orthodox, comprehensive and Greek: "Minds can be enlightened only

by the flames of funeral pyres, and truth cannot shine by its own light." These linostoles (8) condemned many of the captain's speeches in this way, and issued a dictum.

"What!" cried the Simple Soul. "Dicta issued by those people!"

"Not dicta," replied Gordon, "but contradicta at which everyone in Constantinople laughed, the emperor among the first. He was a wise prince who had known how to reduce the apedeutes-linostoles' power to the point where they could do nothing but good. He knew that these gentlemen and many other pastophores (9) had tired the patience of his predecessors with contradicta on much more serious matters."

"He did very well," said the Simple Soul. "The pastophores must be maintained and restrained."

He set down in writing many other reflections that appalled the aged Gordon. "What!" said the old man to himself, "here have I consumed fifty years in increasing my knowledge, and I fear I shall never come up with this almost savage child's natural good sense! I shudder to think that I have laboured to confirm error; he listens only to nature unadorned."

The good man had some of those little books of criticism, those periodical pamphlets wherein men who are incapable of producing anything at all, disparage the production of others, where the Visés insult the Racines, and the Faydits the Fénelons. The Simple Soul looked over some of them. "I compare them," he said, "to certain small insects that deposit their eggs in the hind parts of the finest horses: but that does not stop the horses' progress." The two philosophers scarcely deigned to glance at these samples of the excrement of literature.

They soon read the elements of astronomy together. The Simple Soul had an armillary sphere fetched; this great sight entranced him. "It is hard," he remarked,

“only to begin to know the heavens when the right of contemplating them has been snatched from me ! Jupiter and Saturn revolve in these vast spaces ; millions of suns illumine billions of worlds ; and in this dark corner of the earth where I have been flung there are beings who deprive me, a thinking, seeing creature, of all the worlds my vision might reach, and of that one where God has ordained I should be born ! The light that was created for the whole world is denied me. On the northern horizon where I passed my infancy and childhood, it was not hidden from me. If it were not for you, my dear Gordon, I should be here in complete non-existence.”





CHAPTER XII *WHAT THE SIMPLE SOUL THOUGHT OF THE DRAMA*



YOUNG Simple Soul was like one of those vigorous trees born in barren soil which soon spread their roots and branches when transplanted to more favourable ground. It was very extraordinary that a prison should be this ground.

Among the books which occupied the captives' leisure were some poems, some translations of Greek tragedies, and some French plays. The verses that spoke of love brought pain and pleasure to the Simple Soul's heart. They all spoke to him of his dear Saint Yves. The fable of the Two Pigeons wrung his heart ; he was very far from being able to return to his dovecote (10).

Molière delighted him, and taught him the ways of Paris and of the human race. "Which comedy do you prefer ? "

" 'Tartuffe,' without question."

"I am of your opinion," said Gordon. "It was a tartuffe who threw me into this dungeon, and maybe they were tartuffles who brought you your trouble. What do you think of these Greek tragedies ? "

"Good for the Greeks," said the Simple Soul. But when he read the modern *Iphigénie*, *Phèdre*, *Andromaque*, *Athalie*, he was in ecstasy, sighed, wept and knew them by heart without even wanting to learn them.

"Read *Rodogune*," said Gordon. "It is said to be the masterpiece of the theatre; the other plays you have read with such pleasure are trifles in comparison."

When he had read the first page the young man said—
"That's not by the same author."

"How do you know?"

"I can't say yet, but these verses don't touch either my ear or my heart."

"It's nothing but verses," replied Gordon.

"Why write them then?" returned the Simple Soul.

After reading the play very attentively, with no other object than to enjoy himself, he looked at his friend with dry, astonished eyes, and did not know what to say. At last, pressed by Gordon to recount his sensations, he spoke. "I barely heard the beginning," he said, "I was revolted by the middle; the last scene touched me greatly, although it doesn't seem very likely: I'm not interested in anyone in it, and I haven't remembered twenty lines, I who remember them all when they please me."

"Nevertheless this play passes for the best we have."

"If that is so," he replied, "it is possibly like many people who do not deserve their positions. After all, it is a matter of taste, mine cannot yet be formed: I may be mistaken; but you know I am rather in the habit of saying what I think, or what I feel—I should say. I suspect there is often fallacy, mannerism and caprice in men's judgments. I speak according to nature; it's possible that in me nature is very imperfect; but it's also possible that sometimes nature is rarely consulted by the bulk of men."

Then he recited some verses from *Iphigénie*, of which he was full, and although he did not speak the words well, he put into them so much truth and ardour that he made the old Jansenist cry. He then read *Cinna*; the Jansenist did not cry, but admired greatly.



CHAPTER XIII THE BEAUTIFUL SAINT YVES GOES TO VERSAILLES



WHILE our unlucky friend's mind was being enlightened more than his distress was being alleviated ; while his genius, so long stifled, was expanding with such strength and speed ; while nature, which was becoming perfect in him, was avenging the evil tricks fortune had played on him, what was happening to the Prior and his good sister and the beautiful, cloistered Saint Yves ?

For the first month they were anxious, at the third they were stricken with grief ; false conjectures, ill-founded rumours kept them in fear ; at the end of six months they thought he was dead. Finally, Monsieur and Mademoiselle Kerkabon learned from an old letter which one of the king's guards had sent to Brittany that a young man resembling the Simple Soul had arrived one evening at Versailles, but that he had been carried off during the night, and that from that time nobody had heard speak of him.

“ Alas ! ” sighed Mademoiselle Kerkabon, “ our nephew must have done something foolish and drawn vexations on his head. He is young, he is Low-Breton, he cannot know how to comport himself at court. My

dear brother, I have never seen either Versailles or Paris ; this is a splendid opportunity, maybe we shall find our poor nephew : he is our brother's son, our duty is to rescue him. Who knows that we might not manage to make him subdeacon at last when the impetuosity of youth has calmed down ? He had a great aptitude for science. Do you remember how he argued about the Old and New Testaments ? We are responsible for the salvation of his soul ; we had him baptised ; his fond sweetheart passes her days in weeping for him. We must really go to Paris. If he is hidden in one of those nasty palaces of pleasure about which I have heard so much talk, we will get him away."

The Prior was touched by his sister's words. He set off to find the Bishop of St. Malo, who had baptised the Huron, and asked his advice and support. The prelate approved of the journey and gave the Prior letters of recommendation to Father La Chaise, the king's confessor, who was the most powerful man in the kingdom, to Harlay, the Archbishop of Paris, and to Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux.

The brother and sister set off at last, but when they reached Paris they were as lost as though they were in a vast labyrinth without egress, without a thread to guide them. Their fortune was but meagre, and they had to take carriages every day on their voyages of discovery, and they discovered nothing.

The Prior presented himself at the house of the Reverend Father La Chaise, but he was with Mademoiselle Du Tron, and could not grant audiences to priors. He went to the Archbishop's gate, but the prelate was shut up with the lovely Madame de Lesdiguières on ecclesiastical business. He rushed to the Bishop of Meaux's country house, but this cleric was examining with Mademoiselle de Mauléon the mystic love of Madame Guyon (11). However, he managed to make himself heard by these two prelates ; both declared they could not mix

themselves up with his nephew's affairs, seeing that he was not subdeacon.

At last he saw the Jesuit, who received him with open arms and protested he had always had for him a quite especial regard (this without ever having known him). He vowed the Society had always been very attached to the Low-Bretons. "But," he said, "hasn't your nephew the misfortune to be a Huguenot?"

"Most assuredly not, Reverend Father."

"Isn't he a Jansenist?"

"I can assure your reverence that he is barely a Christian: it is only about eleven months ago that we baptised him."

"That's good, that's good, we will look after him. Have you a big living?"

"Oh, very small, and our nephew costs us a great deal."

"Are there any Jansenists in your neighbourhood? Be very careful, my dear Prior, they are more dangerous than the Huguenots and the atheists."

"Reverend Father, we have none at all; at Our Lady of the Mountain we do not know what Jansenism is."

"So much the better. Go along, there's nothing I won't do for you." He sent the Prior affectionately on his way, and never thought any more about him.

The time passed, and the Prior and his sister were in despair.

Meanwhile, the wretched bailie was urging on the marriage of his great dolt of a son to the lovely Saint Yves, who had been taken out of the convent for this express purpose. She still loved her dear godson as much as she detested the husband who was offered her. The shame of having been put in a convent increased her passion; the order to marry the bailie's son raised it to fever heat. Regret, affection, horror overwhelmed her soul. As is well known, love is bolder and more ingenious in a young girl than is friendship in an aged prior and aunt of more than forty-five. Further, she was much

improved by the novels she had read secretly in her convent.

The lovely Saint Yves remembered a letter that a life-guard had sent to Lower Brittany, and which had been talked about in the province. She resolved to go to Versailles herself to obtain information, to throw herself at the ministers' feet if her husband was in prison, as he was said to be, and to obtain justice for him. An unknown something told her secretly that at court nothing is refused to a pretty girl; but she did not know the price that had to be paid.

Her decision taken, she was comforted, tranquil, and no longer rebuffed her silly future husband. She welcomed the loathsome father-in-law, made much of her brother, and radiated joy throughout the house. Then, on the day fixed for the ceremony, she left secretly at four o'clock in the morning with her little wedding presents and all the money she had been able to get together. Her plans were so well laid that she was already more than ten leagues away when towards noon somebody went to her room. Great were the surprise and consternation. The inquisitive bailie asked more questions that day than he had done all the week; the husband remained more stupid than he had ever been. Father Saint Yves in great wrath made up his mind to follow his sister. The bailie and his son had a mind to accompany him. Thus did fate lead to Paris nearly everyone in this canton of Lower Brittany.

The lovely Saint Yves suspected she was being followed. She was on horseback, and adroitly obtained information from the couriers as to whether they had met a fat cleric, a huge bailie and a young ass rushing along on the road to Paris. Having learned on the third day that they were not far off, she took a different route, and had enough artfulness and luck to reach Versailles while her pursuers were still vainly seeking her in Paris.

But how to find her way at Versailles? Young, pretty,

friendless, unprotected, unknown, exposed to every danger, how dared she seek one of the king's guards ? She thought of appealing to a Jesuit of low degree. There were Jesuits for every rank of life : " just as God," they said, " has given different foods to different species of animals," so had He given the king his confessor, whom all those that solicited him for livings called THE HEAD OF THE GALLICAN CHURCH ; then came the princesses' confessors ; the ministers did not have any at all, they were not so foolish. There were Jesuits for the common herd, and particularly Jesuits for chambermaids, whereby the secrets of their mistresses became known ; and it was not badly paid work. The lovely Saint Yves appealed to one of these last, who called himself Father Tout-à-tous. She confessed to him, told him all her adventures, who she was, her danger, and implored him to find her a lodging with some good pious woman who would shelter her from temptation.

Father Tout-à-tous put her in the house of the wife of one of the king's butlers ; this woman was one of his most trusty penitents. As soon as she was there she hastened to gain the confidence and friendship of this woman ; she obtained information of the Breton guard and asked him to come to see her. On learning from him that her lover had been carried off after speaking with a head clerk, she ran to the head clerk's house : the sight of a lovely woman softened him, for it must be admitted that God only created women in order to tame men. The mollified scribe confessed everything. " Your lover has been in the Bastille nearly a year, and if it were not for you he might be there for the rest of his life." The gentle Saint Yves swooned. When she had recovered consciousness, the scribe continued : " I have no power to do any good," he said, " I am limited to doing harm sometimes. Listen to me, go and see Monsieur de Saint Pouange, who does both good and evil ; he is the cousin and favourite of My Lord Louvois. This mini-

ster has two souls ; Monsieur de Pouange is one of them, Madame Dufresnoy is the other, but she is not at Versailles at present ; all that remains for you to do is to soften the heart of the protector I have mentioned."

The lovely Saint Yves, torn between faint joy and exceeding grief, between slender hopes and sad fears, pursued by her brother, adoring her lover, wiping away her tears and then shedding more, trembling, losing heart and then plucking up her courage, hurried to the house of Monsieur de Saint Pouange.





CHAPTER XIV

GROWTH OF THE SIMPLE SOUL'S INTELLECT



HE Simple Soul made swift progress in the sciences, and particularly in the science of man. The cause of the rapid growth of his intellect was as much due to his savage rearing as to the natural stamp of his character ; for, having learned nothing in his childhood, he had acquired no prejudices. His understanding never having been warped by error had retained its uprightness. He saw things as they are, whereas we are given in our infancy ideas that make us for the rest of our lives see things as they are not. "Those who persecute you are execrable," he said to his friend Gordon. "I pity you for being oppressed, but I pity you too for being Jansenist. Every sect seems to me a rallying place for error. Tell me, are there any sects in geometry ? "

"No, my dear child," answered the good Gordon, sighing ; "all men are agreed on demonstrated truth, but are too divided on truths that are still obscure."

"Say rather on falsities that are obscure. If there were one single truth in your mass of arguments, which have been sifted again and again for so many centuries, it would doubtless have been discovered, and the world would have been in accord on that point at least. If this truth were as necessary to the earth as the sun is, it would

shine as the sun shines. It is an absurdity, an outrage on mankind, an affront to the infinite and supreme Being, to say—There is one truth essential to man, and God has hidden it.”

All that was said by this ignorant young man, nature’s pupil, made a deep impression on the mind of the aged and unfortunate scholar. “Is it really true,” he cried, “that I have been making myself miserable over chimeras? I am much more certain of my misery than I am of efficacious grace. I have wasted my days reasoning on God’s liberty and the liberty of mankind, but I have lost my own. Neither St. Augustine nor St. Prosper will drag me out of the abyss I am in.”

“Well,” said the Simple Soul characteristically, “do you want me to tell you fearlessly my own conviction? Those who get themselves persecuted for the sake of empty arguments do not seem to me very wise; those who persecute them appear to me monsters.”

The two prisoners were in full agreement as to the injustice of their captivity. “I’m a hundred times more to be pitied than you,” said the Simple Soul; “I was born free as the air. I had two interests in life, freedom and the girl I love; both have been snatched from me. Here are both of us in irons, without knowing why and without being able to ask why. For twenty years of my life I was a Huron; people say the Hurons are savages because they take revenge on their enemies; but they have never persecuted their friends. Hardly had I set foot in France than I shed my blood for her. Maybe I saved a whole province, and as a reward I am swallowed up by this living tomb where I should already have died raving mad had it not been for you. Aren’t there any laws in this country? Men are condemned unheard! It’s not like that in England. Ah! It’s not against the English I ought to have fought.” His budding philosophy could not quell a nature outraged in its chief right; the river of his just wrath flowed free.

His companion did not contradict him in any way. Absence always makes the hungry heart grow fonder, and philosophy does not diminish the hunger. The Simple Soul spoke as often of his dear Saint Yves as of moral science and metaphysics. As his consciousness clarified so did his love grow. He read some new novels, but found little in them that represented the state of his own soul. He felt that his spirit always soared above and beyond what he read. "Nearly all these authors," he said, "have only wit and artifice." Eventually the good Jansenist priest became by imperceptible degrees the confidant of his heart. His previous acquaintance with love was only as a sin with which one charged oneself at confession. He learned to know it as an emotion as noble as it is sweet, that can exalt the soul as well as ease it, and that sometimes even reveals a man's qualities. As a final miracle, in short, a Huron converted a Jansenist.





CHAPTER XV

THE LOVELY SAINT YVES RESISTS SOME DELICATE PROPOSALS



THE lovely Saint Yves, more fond even than her lover, went to see Monsieur de Saint Pouange, accompanied by the lady friend with whom she was lodging, their faces hidden in their coifs. The first thing she saw at the door was her brother coming out. She was dismayed, but her devout friend reassured her. "It is just because something has been said against you that you must speak. You can be sure that in this country accusers are always in the right unless one hastens to confound them. And unless I am much mistaken your presence will have more effect than your brother's words."

A woman madly in love is always daring, however little encouragement she may receive. Mademoiselle Saint Yves appeared at the audience. Her youth and beauty, her gentle eyes moist with tears, made everyone look at her. All the men courting the under-minister's favour forgot for a moment the idol of power in order to contemplate the idol of beauty. Saint Pouange ushered her into a closet; she spoke with emotion and charm. Saint Pouange was touched. She trembled, he reassured her. "Come back this evening," he said. "Your affairs merit leisurely thought and discussion. There are too many people here, audiences are disposed

of too quickly : I must talk to you fully about the matters that concern you." Then, after a eulogistic reference to her beauty and the nobility of her sentiments, he advised her to come at seven o'clock that evening.

She did not fail to be there. The devout friend accompanied her again, but remained in the audience-chamber and read the "Christian Pedagogue" (12) while Saint Pouange and the lovely Saint Yves were in the back closet.

"Do you really think, Mademoiselle," he started, "that your brother came to ask me for a *lettre de cachet* for you ? Truly I would rather despatch one to take him back to Lower Brittany."

"They are very liberal then with *lettres de cachet* in your offices, seeing that people come from the other end of the kingdom to solicit them as they solicit pensions. I am far from asking for one for my brother. I have much to complain of in him, but I respect the liberty of mankind, and ask that of the man I wish to marry, of a man to whom the king owes the preservation of a province, of a man who can render him good service and who is the son of an officer killed in his service. What is the charge against him ? How is it possible he was so cruelly treated without being given a hearing ? "

The under-minister then showed her the letters of the Jesuit spy and the treacherous bailie.

"What ! are there such monsters in the world ? and they wanted to force me to marry this wicked, ridiculous man's ridiculous son ! And it's on the word of people like these that a citizen's fate depends !" She threw herself at his feet and, sobbing, begged the freedom of the noble man she adored. In this state her charms showed to greater advantage than ever. She was so lovely that Saint Pouange, losing all shame, intimated that her quest would be successful if she began by giving him the first blossoms of the flower she had reserved for her lover. Saint Yves, dismayed and bewildered, affected

for a long time not to hear him ; he had to be more explicit. A discreet word dropped produced another stronger one that was followed by another still more expressive. She was offered not only the cancellation of the *lettre de cachet* but compensation, money, honours, the placing of palaces at her disposal ; and the more he promised the greater grew his desire not to be refused.

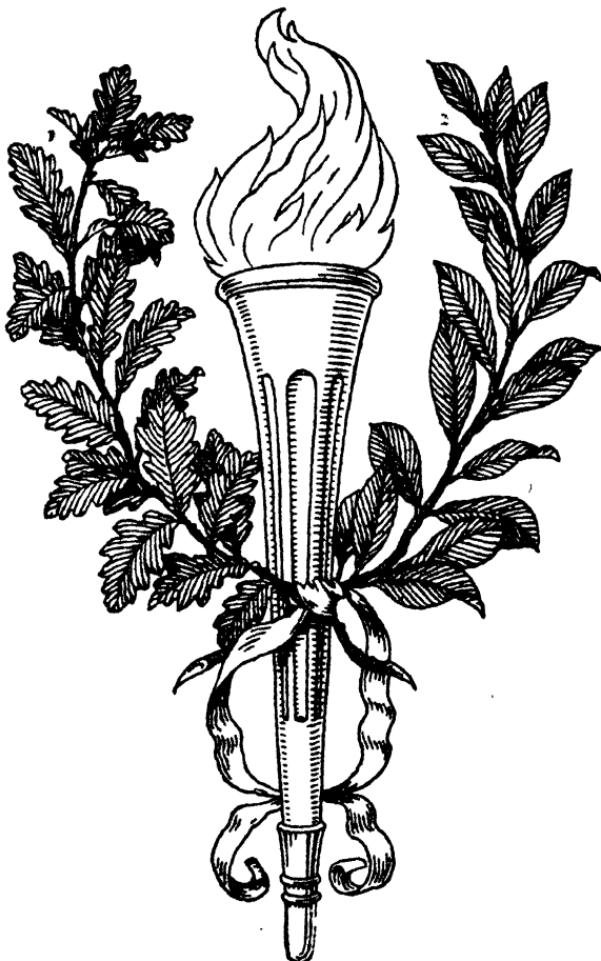
Saint Yves wept, suffocated, half stupefied on a sofa, hardly believing what she saw and heard. It was the turn of Saint Pouange to fall at her feet. He was not without charm and would not have shocked a less prejudiced heart ; but Saint Yves adored her lover, and believed that to deceive him in order to serve him was a horrible crime. Saint Pouange redoubled his entreaties and promises, and at last lost his head so far as to say that that was the only way to get out of prison the man in whom she took such violent, fond interest. This strange conversation dragged on. The devout lady reading her "Christian Pedagogue" said : "Good heavens ! what can have kept them occupied for two hours ? My Lord Saint Pouange has never before given such a long audience ; perhaps he has refused the poor girl everything, seeing that she is still entreating him."

Her companion came out of the back closet at last ; she was quite distraught, could not speak, and in a state of profound reflection on the character of the great and semi-great who so lightly sacrifice men's freedom and women's honour.

She did not say a word all the way home, but on arriving blazed out and related everything. The devout lady made the sign of the cross several times. "My dear friend," she said, "to-morrow you must consult Father Tout-à-tous, our director ; he has much influence with Monsieur de Saint Pouange ; he confesses several servants in the household ; he is a pious and obliging man, and is the director of many fashionable women too : put your-

self in his hands ; that is what I have always done, and I have always derived benefit from it. We poor women need a man's guidance."

"Very well, then, my dear friend, to-morrow I will go and see Father Tout-à-tous."





CHAPTER XVI

SHE CONSULTS A JESUIT



S soon as the lovely and heart-broken Saint Yves was with her confessor, she confided to him that a powerful and passionate man had offered to get the man she was lawfully to marry out of prison, but that he asked a great price for this service ; that she had an awful repugnance to commit such an infidelity, and that if only her own life were involved she would willingly sacrifice it rather than yield.

“ What a loathsome sinner ! ” said Father Tout-à-tous. “ Really you must tell me this bad man’s name ; some Jansenist of course ; I shall denounce him to his reverence Father La Chaise, who will have him sent to the lodging where the dear person you are to marry is at present.”

After a period of great embarrassment and irresolution the poor girl said the man’s name was Saint Pouange.

“ Monseigneur de Saint Pouange ! ” cried the Jesuit. “ Ah ! my daughter, that is quite another matter ; he is cousin to the greatest minister we have ever had, a good man, a worker for the good cause, a good Christian ; he cannot have had such an idea, you must have misunderstood him.”

“ I understood him only too well, Father. Whatever I do I am lost ; my choice lies between misery and shame ; either my lover has to remain buried alive, or I must make

myself unworthy to live. I cannot let him perish, and I cannot save him."

Father Tout-à-tous tried to calm her with soft words. "In the first place, my daughter, never use the words 'my lover'; there is a something worldly about them which might offend God: say 'my husband'; for although he is not your husband yet, you regard him as such, and nothing is more honourable.

"In the second place, although he is your husband in idea, he is not your husband in fact: consequently, you would not be committing adultery, a great sin that must be avoided as often as possible.

"In the third place, there is no culpable malice in actions of which the intention is pure, and there can be no purer intention than that of delivering your husband.

"In the fourth place, there are in sacred history examples that supply remarkable precedents for your conduct. Saint Augustine records that during the proconsulate of Septimius Acyndinus, in the year 340 of our salvation, a poor man who was unable to render unto Cæsar that which was Cæsar's was sentenced to death, as is just, in spite of the maxim—'Where there is nothing the king loses his rights.' The point in question concerned a pound of gold; the condemned man had a wife to whom God had given beauty and wisdom. A rich old man promised to give the lady a pound of gold and even more, provided she committed the loathsome sin with him. The lady saw no harm in saving her husband's life, and Saint Augustine strongly approves of her generous surrender. It is true the rich old man deceived her, and maybe her husband was hanged nevertheless; but she had done all she could to save his life.

"You can be certain, my daughter, that when a Jesuit quotes Saint Augustine to you this saint must have been entirely in the right. I do not advise you, you are wise, but I conjecture that you will be of use to your husband. Monseigneur de Saint Pouange is an honourable man, he

will not deceive you : that is all I can say to you. I shall pray to God for you, and I hope everything will happen for His greater glory."

The lovely Saint Yves, no less dismayed by the arguments of the Jesuit than by the proposals of the under-minister, returned to her friend's house bewildered. She was tempted to free herself by death from the horror of leaving her adored lover in loathsome captivity, and from the shame of freeing him at the price of what she held most dear, which should belong to no one but this unfortunate lover.





CHAPTER XVII

HER HIGH-MINDEDNESS MAKES HER SUCCUMB

SHE begged her friend to kill her, but this woman was no less considerate than the Jesuit, and put things still more clearly. "It is very sad," she said, "but things hardly ever arrange themselves otherwise at this pleasant, intrigue-loving, far-famed court. The most meagre places and the most important have often been given for nothing but the price that is asked of you. Listen, you have made me feel friendly and trustful in you ; I confess to you that if I had been as difficult as you are my husband would not be enjoying the little post by which he lives ; he knows it, and, far from being vexed, thinks me his benefactress, and looks on himself as my humble servant. Do you think that all the men who have been at the head of provinces, or of armies even, owe their honour and fortune merely to their services ? There are some who owe their positions to their wives. The high honours of war have often been solicited by love, and the place has been given to the husband of the loveliest.

"Your position is much more interesting ; it is a question of freeing your lover and marrying him ; you have a sacred duty to perform. The lovely and fashionable ladies I have mentioned were not blamed at all ; you will be applauded, it will be said that you permitted

yourself this weakness because you were unduly high-minded."

"Ah! what high-mindedness!" cried the lovely Saint Yves; "what a labyrinth of iniquity! what a country! and what a knowledge of men I am gaining! A Father La Chaise and a ridiculous bailie have my lover thrown into prison, my family persecutes me, and the only hand that is offered me in my trouble wants to dis-honour me. A Jesuit has ruined one fine man, and another Jesuit wants to ruin me. There are nothing but pitfalls all round me, and soon I shall have no more money. I must kill myself, or else speak to the king. I will throw myself at his feet when he passes on his way to mass or to the theatre."

"You won't be allowed to go near him," answered her good friend, "and if you were so unlucky as to speak, Master de Louvois or the Reverend Father La Chaise could have you buried in the depths of a convent for the rest of your life."

While this worthy woman was thus increasing the perplexities of this soul in despair, and driving the dagger into her heart, a messenger arrived from Monsieur de Saint Pouange with a letter and two beautiful ear-rings. Saint Yves refused the whole lot, but her friend took charge of them.

As soon as the messenger had gone, the confidante read the letter, which suggested that the two friends should come to a little supper that evening. Saint Yves swore she would not go. The devout lady wanted her to try on the diamond ear-rings. Saint Yves could not stand it, and fought against the idea all day. At last, with no thought of anything but her lover, vanquished, won over, not knowing where she was being taken, she suffered herself to be led to the fatal supper. Nothing had been able to persuade her to deck herself with the ear-rings; the confidante brought them and put them on in spite of her before they sat down to table. Saint

Yves was so confused and troubled that she let herself be tormented ; and the host deduced from that a very favourable omen. Towards the end of the meal the confidante discreetly retired. The host then produced the cancellation of the *lettre de cachet*, a warrant for a considerable present, a charter for a company, and was lavish of promises. "Oh, dear me," sighed Saint Yves, "how I should love you if you didn't want loving so much!"

At last, after long resisting, after sobbing, screaming and weeping, worn out with the fight, bewildered and faint, she had to yield. The only resource she had was to promise herself to think of the Simple Soul all the time, while the merciless wretch pitilessly availed himself of her predicament.





CHAPTER XVIII *SHE DELIVERS HER LOVER AND A JANSENIST*



T daybreak she fled to Paris armed with the minister's order. It is hard to depict what passed in her heart during this journey. Imagine a virtuous and noble soul, humiliated by her shame, intoxicated with affection, torn with remorse at having been unfaithful to her lover, thrilled with the pleasure of freeing the man she adores. Her sorrows, her battles, her success filled her thoughts. She was no longer the simple maiden whose country rearing had narrowed her ideas. Love and distress had developed her. Emotion had made as much progress in her as had reason in the mind of her unlucky lover. Girls learn to feel more easily than men learn to think. Her adventure taught her more than four years in a convent.

Her dress was simple in the extreme. She looked with horror at the garb in which she had appeared before her baleful benefactor ; she had left her diamond ear-rings for her devout friend without even looking at them. Abashed and delighted, idolising the Simple Soul, and hating herself, she arrived at length at the gate

“ Of that appalling palace of revenge
That often harbours crime and innocence.”

When she had to get out of the coach her strength

failed her, and she had to be helped out. She went inside the gate, her heart beating, her eyes wet, consternation on her face. She was presented to the governor ; she tried to speak to him ; her voice died away ; she showed her order with a few broken words. The governor liked his prisoner, and was very glad he was to be freed. His heart was not hardened as some of his honourable colleagues' hearts are, those men who think of nothing but the reward attached to the custody of their prisoners, who make their living out of their victims, batten on other men's misery, and experience secretly a horrid joy in seeing the poor wretches' tears.

He had the prisoner brought to his room. The two lovers saw each other, and both fainted. The lovely Saint Yves long remained still and lifeless : the other soon regained his courage. "This lady is your wife apparently," said the governor. "You never told me you were married. I am told it is to her generous efforts that you owe your deliverance."

"Ah! I am unworthy to be his wife," sighed the lovely Saint Yves, and fell back unconscious once more.

When she had come to herself again she presented the reward-warrant and the company-charter with a hand that still trembled. The Simple Soul, as astonished as touched, waked from one dream to fall into another. "Why have I been shut up here ? how have you managed to get me out ? where are the monsters who put me here ? You are an angel come down from the sky to my aid."

The lovely Saint Yves dropped her eyes, looked at her lover, blushed, and the moment after turned her head away, her eyes filled with tears. She told him all she knew and all that had happened to her, except that one thing she wanted hidden for ever, which anyone more accustomed to the world and more learned in the ways of the court than was the Simple Soul would have easily guessed.

"Is it possible that a wretch like that bailie had the power to steal my liberty from me? Ah! I see that some men are like the vilest beasts; they are all capable of doing harm. But is it possible that a monk, a Jesuit king's confessor, contributed to my misfortune as much as that bailie, without my having the faintest idea of the pretext for the loathsome rascal's persecution? Did he make out I was a Jansenist? How could you remember me? I don't deserve it; why I was only a savage then. Really! without advice or help you undertook the journey to Versailles! You had but to appear and my bonds were broken! There must be an invincible charm in beauty and virtue that makes iron gates fall, and steel hearts melt!"

At the word "virtue" sobs escaped Saint Yves. She did not know how virtuous she was in committing the crime with which she reproached herself.

"Angel who has broken my bonds," continued her lover, "if you have had (which I don't yet understand) influence enough to have justice rendered me, have it rendered also to an old man who first taught me how to think, just as you have taught me how to love. Misfortune has forged a link between us; I love him as a father, I cannot live without either you or him."

"What! you want me to ask the same man who . . . ?"

"Yes, I want to owe you everything, and I don't want ever to owe anything but to you: write to this influential man, overwhelm me with your goodness, finish what you have begun, complete your miracles."

She felt she had to do all her lover demanded: she tried to write, but her hand refused to obey. She began the letter three times, and tore it up three times. At last she finished it, and the two lovers took their departure after embracing the aged martyr to efficacious grace.

The happy and harrassed Saint Yves knew where her brother was lodging, and thither she went. Her lover took a room in the same house. Hardly had they ar-

rived than she received from her protector an order for the release of the good Gordon, and a note asking a rendezvous for the following day. Thus, of every honourable and generous action that she did her dishonour was the price. She looked with abhorrence at this custom of bartering men's fortune and misfortune. She gave the order of release to her lover, and refused the rendezvous with a benefactor she could never see again without dying of shame and distress. Nothing but the freeing of a friend could tear the Simple Soul from her side : he flew on his mission. He accomplished this duty with his thoughts on the strange happenings of this world, and with admiration of the brave virtue of a young girl to whom two luckless men owed more than life.





CHAPTER XIX *THE SIMPLE SOUL, THE LOVELY SAINT YVES AND THEIR RELATIONS COME TOGETHER AGAIN*

The generous and respectable, but unfaithful, girl was with her brother, Father Saint Yves, the good Prior of the Mountain and dame Kerkabon. All were equally astonished, but their predicaments and their sentiments differed vastly. Father Saint Yves wept over his faults at the feet of his sister, who forgave him. The Prior and his sensitive sister wept also, but for joy. The infamous bailie and his unbearable son did not trouble this touching scene. They had fled at the first rumour of their enemy's release: they were in a hurry to bury their folly and their fear in the depths of their province.

The four illustrious persons, torn with a hundred conflicting emotions, awaited the return of the young man with the friend he would have freed. Father Saint Yves dared not raise his eyes before his sister; the good Kerkabon said—"I shall see my dear nephew again, then!"

"You will see him again," returned the charming Saint Yves, "but he is not the man he was before. His bearing, his manner, his ideas, his mind, all are changed. He is as sophisticated now as he was naive and strange to everything before. He will be the honour and consola-

tion of your family: I wish I could be the joy of mine!"

"You have changed a great deal too," said the Prior; "what has happened to make you so different?"

During this conversation the Simple Soul arrived holding the Jansenist by the hand. There was a change of scene, and the action became more interesting. It opened with the fond caresses of uncle and aunt. Father Saint Yves nearly went down on his knees to the Simple Soul, who was no longer a simple soul. The two lovers spoke by looks that expressed all the emotion which thrilled them. On the face of one of them satisfaction and gratitude bloomed; in the soft but somewhat bewildered eyes of the other embarrassment was reflected. It was astonishing to the company that she mingled sadness with so much joy.

The aged Gordon soon became dear to the whole family. He had been in distress with the young prisoner, and that was a great title to their regard. He owed his freedom to the two lovers, and that alone reconciled him to love; the harshness of his former views left his heart: like the Huron, he had become a man. Each related his adventures before supper. The two priests and the aunt listened like children who are being told ghost stories, and like people who were all interested in such a series of calamities.

"It is sad," said Gordon; "there are perhaps five hundred innocent prisoners at present in the same irons that Mademoiselle Saint Yves has wrenched apart: their miseries are unknown. There are hands in plenty to beat the crowd of unfortunates, but rarely one to help them." The truth of this reflection augmented his gratitude and appreciation: everything increased the lovely Saint Yves' triumph. Everyone marvelled at the nobility and resolution of her soul. Their admiration was mixed with that respect one feels in spite of oneself for a person one believes to have influence at court. But

Father Saint Yves said sometimes—"What can my sister have done to obtain that influence so quickly?"

They intended sitting down to table very early. Suddenly the devout lady from Versailles arrived without knowing anything of all that had happened. She was in a coach with six horses, and it was clear to whom this equipage belonged. She entered with the imposing air of a very important person at court, nodded to the company and drew the lovely Saint Yves aside: "Why do you keep everyone waiting? Follow me; here are your diamonds, you forgot them." She was unable to speak so low that the Simple Soul did not hear: he saw the diamonds; the brother was taken aback; the aunt and uncle experienced only the surprise of honest people who have never seen such magnificence before. The young man who had formed his mind by a year of reflection, reflected now in spite of himself, and his face clouded for a moment. His mistress saw it; a death-like pallor crept over her beautiful face, she shuddered and could barely hold herself up. "You have ruined me," she said to her fatal friend, "you kill me!" These words wrung the Simple Soul's heart, but he had already learned how to keep his self-possession. He did not make any comment, for fear of agitating her before her brother, but he went as pale as she.

Saint Yves, aghast at the change she saw come over her lover's face, dragged this woman out of the room into a little passage and threw the diamonds on the ground at her feet. "You know well I was not seduced by those! But the man who gave me them will never see me again." The friend picked them up. "Let him take them back," added Saint Yves, "or give them to you. Now go, do not make me more ashamed of myself than I am." The ambassadress returned home, quite unable to comprehend the remorse she witnessed.

The lovely Saint Yves, crushed, feeling a revolution in her body that suffocated her, was obliged to take to her

bed, but so that no one should be alarmed she did not speak of what was troubling her, and on the pretext of fatigue begged permission to rest. But this was after she had reassured the company with soft comforting words, and had thrown at her lover glances that set flame to his soul.

As she was not there to enliven it, the supper was sad at first, with that interesting sadness that makes these pleasant, beneficial talks so much better than the shallow gaiety one seeks, and which is usually nothing but a tiresome noise.

Gordon told in a few words the history of Jansenism and Molinism, and the persecutions with which one faction crushed the other, and the stubbornness of both. The Simple Soul commented on it and complained of the men who, not content with all the discord their causes kindle, invent new evils for chimerical causes and unintelligible absurdities. Gordon recited, the other judged; the guests listened with much emotion, and filled their minds with new light. Mention was made of the length of our misfortunes and the shortness of our life. Someone observed that every profession has a vice and a danger attached to it, and that from the prince down to the poorest beggar, everyone seemed to indict nature. How is it there are so many men who for such small reward make themselves the persecutors, maltreators and butchers of other men? With what inhuman indifference does a bureaucrat sign the extermination of a family, and with what still more barbarous joy do his hirelings execute the extermination!

“In my youth,” said the good Gordon, “I saw a relative of Marshal Marillac who, being pursued in his province judicially because of this illustrious unfortunate, hid himself in Paris under an assumed name. He was an old man of seventy-two. His wife, who accompanied him, was about the same age. They had had a wastrel son who when he was fourteen had fled from his father’s

house ; first a soldier, then a deserter, he had passed through all the stages of debauchery and distress : at last, having added a seigniorial name to his own, he went into Cardinal Richelieu's guards (for this priest had guards, as well as Mazarin) ; he had reached the rank of under-officer in this troop of mercenary satellites. This adventurer was charged with the arrest of the old man and his wife, and he accomplished his task with all the harshness of a man who wants to please his master. As he led them away he heard these two victims lament the long series of misfortunes they had experienced since their babyhood. The father and mother counted their son's excesses and ruin among their greatest misfortunes. He recognised them, but took them to prison none the less, while he told them that His Eminence must be served before everything else. His Eminence rewarded his zeal.

“ I have seen one of Father La Chaise's spies betray his own brother, in the hope of getting a small living which in the end he did not get ; and I have seen him die, not of remorse, but of grief at being tricked by a Jesuit.

“ The office of confessor, which I long filled, acquainted me with the inside life of families ; I have seen barely one that was not immersed in profound affliction, whereas from without, by reason of their mask of happiness, they seemed to wallow in joy, and I have always noticed that great griefs were the fruit of our unbridled covetousness.”

“ For my part,” said the Simple Soul, “ I believe that an exalted, grateful and sensitive soul can live happily, and I count on enjoying unalloyed happiness with the lovely and generous Saint Yves. I flatter myself,” he added, turning to her brother with a friendly smile, “ that you will not refuse me as you did last year, and that I shall go to work more decorously.” Father Saint Yves lost himself in excuses for the past and protestations of eternal affection.

Uncle Kerkabon said it would be the happiest day of his life. The good aunt was in ecstasy and wept with joy. "I told you you would never be subdeacon," she cried; "this sacrament is worth much more than the other; would to God I had been honoured with it! but I shall be a mother to you." And from that moment the conversation became a contest to outstrip each other in praise for the gentle Saint Yves.

Her lover's heart was too full of all she had done for him, he loved her too deeply, for the incident of the diamonds to make a great impression on his heart. But the words he had heard too clearly—"You kill me!"—still secretly frightened him and spoilt his joy, while the eulogies of his beautiful mistress made his love grow still more. She was the sole topic of conversation, and nobody spoke of anything but the happiness the two lovers deserved. It was arranged they should all live together in Paris, and great projects for improving their fortune and position were discussed. The company gave themselves up entirely to all the hopes that the least glimmer of happiness produces so easily. But the Simple Soul felt at the bottom of his heart a secret presentiment that rejected this illusion. He read over again the promises signed Saint Pouange, and the warrants signed Louvois; the company spoke of these men as they were, or as they believed them to be. Everyone talked ministers and ministries with that table-liberty that is regarded in France as the most precious liberty that can be tasted on earth.

"If I were king of France," said the Simple Soul, "here is the minister of war I should choose: I should want a man of the noblest birth, because he has to give orders to the nobility. I should demand that he be an officer himself, that he should have passed through all the ranks, should have been lieutenant-general at least, and be worthy of being marshal of France; for is it not essential he should have served himself so that he may be better

acquainted with the details of the service ? and will not officers obey a warrior, who like them has shown his courage, with a hundred times greater alacrity than they will obey an official who, no matter what his intellect, can only guess at field operations ? I should not be sorry that my minister was generous, although my chancellor of the exchequer might be a little embarrassed at times by his generosity. I should like his work to be easy and that he should be even conspicuous for that exhilarating cheerfulness of mind, essential quality in a man who is in authority, which is so agreeable to the nation and makes every duty less difficult." He wanted his minister to have this characteristic because he had always noticed that good temper is incompatible with cruelty. Monsieur de Louvois, maybe, would have been ill-satisfied with the Simple Soul's desires. His merit was of another order.

But while the company was at table the unfortunate girl's sickness took a fatal turn ; her blood was on fire, she was in a burning fever ; she suffered without complaining, as she did not wish to disturb her guests' enjoyment. Her brother, knowing she was not asleep, went to the head of her bed and was startled by her condition. Everyone came to the room, the lover immediately behind the brother. Without doubt he was the most alarmed and saddened of them all, but he had learned to add discretion to the happy gifts nature had lavished on him, and a sense of the proprieties started swiftly to dominate him.

A local doctor was fetched at once. He was one of those who visit their patients at the gallop, mix up the malady of their patient with that of the last one they have seen, and work by blind rule of thumb in a science which even experience, knowledge and sound judgment cannot strip of danger and uncertainty. He made the patient worse by his haste to prescribe a fashionable remedy. Fashions

even in medicine! In Paris it was but too common a mania.

The sorrow-stricken Saint Yves helped even more than her doctor to make her illness dangerous. Her soul was killing her body. The crowding thoughts that tormented her carried into her veins a more dangerous poison than that of the most consuming fever.





CHAPTER XX *THE LOVELY SAINT YVES DIES, AND WHAT HAPPENED AS A RESULT*



NOTHER doctor was called, but he, instead of helping nature and letting her work her will in a young person whose whole being was calling her back to life, spent all his time in fighting with his colleague. Within two days the disease took a fatal turn. The brain, which is said to be the seat of the understanding, was as violently affected as the heart, which is said to be the seat of the emotions.

What incomprehensible mechanics have made man's organs subservient to emotion and thought ? How can one solitary distressing idea disturb the blood flow ? And how does the blood in its turn carry its disorders into man's mind ? What is this unknown fluid, the existence of which is certain, that more swiftly and nimbly than light wings its way in the twinkling of an eye into the vital channels, that produces sensation, memory, sorrow or joy, reason or folly, that recalls with horror what one wishes to forget, and that makes of a reasoning animal either an object of admiration or a subject for tears and pity ?

That was what the good Gordon said, and this natural reflection, so rarely made by man, did not protect him from the pity he felt, for he was not one of those wretched

philosophers who force themselves to feel nothing. He was touched by this young girl's fate, as a father might be who sees the child he has cherished slowly dying. Father Saint Yves was in despair, the Prior and his sister were in floods of tears. But who can paint her lover's state of mind ? There is no language with expressions capable of reaching this peak of his sorrows ; all languages are too imperfect.

The aunt, herself almost without life, held the dying girl's head in her feeble arms ; her brother was on his knees at the foot of the bed ; her lover clasped her hand which he bathed with tears, while he sobbed ; he called her his benefactress, his life, his hope, the other half of his being, his mistress, his mate, his wife. At the word " wife," she sighed, looked at him with inexpressible tenderness, and suddenly uttered a cry of horror ; then, in one of those intervals when dejection, suffering and the oppressed senses suspended for a moment leave the soul its liberty and strength, she cried—" I, your wife ! oh, dear lover, this name, this joy, this reward, are not for me ; I am dying, and I deserve it. O god of my heart ! you whom I have sacrificed to the powers of evil, it's all over, I am punished, live and be happy ! "

These tender, terrible words were not understood, but they carried fear and pity into the hearts of all present. She had the courage to explain. Every word made them shudder with astonishment, compassion and grief. They all joined in detestation of the man of power who had only repaired an injustice by a crime, and who had forced the most virtuous and chaste of women into being his accomplice.

" What ! you guilty ! " cried her lover. " Never ! crime can only be in the heart, and your heart belongs to virtue and to me ! " These sentiments he confirmed with words that seemed to draw the lovely Saint Yves back to life. She felt comforted and surprised to find she was still loved. The aged Gordon while still Jansen-

ist would have condemned him ; but now, grown wise, he applauded him and wept.

In the middle of these tears and apprehensions, while this dear girl's danger filled all their hearts, and everyone was in dismay, a messenger from the court was announced. A messenger ! From whom ? and for what ? He came from the king's confessor for the Prior of the Mountain ; it was not Father La Chaise who had written, but Brother Vadbled, his valet, at that time a very important man who communicated the reverend father's wishes to the archbishops, promised livings, and sometimes despatched *lettres de cachet*. He wrote to the Abbot of the Mountain that "his reverence was apprised of his nephew's adventures, that his imprisonment was only a misapprehension, that these little misfortunes often happened, that he must not take any notice of it, that finally it would be convenient for him the Prior to present his nephew to him on the morrow, that he must bring the good man Gordon with him too, that he, Brother Vadbled, would introduce them to his reverence and to Master de Louvois, who would have a word with them in his anteroom."

He added that the Simple Soul's story and his fight with the English had been told the king, that His Majesty would certainly deign to notice him in passing through the gallery, and perhaps would even nod to him. The letter finished with the flattering hope that all the ladies of the court would hasten to invite his nephew to their dressing-closets, that several of them would say—"Good day, Mr. Simple Soul," and that without any doubt there would be talk of him at the king's supper table. The letter was signed—"Your affectionate Vadbled, Jesuit brother."

The Prior read the letter out loud ; his nephew was furious, but controlled his temper for a moment, and said nothing to the messenger. Instead, he turned to his companion in misfortune and asked him what he

thought of this sort of thing. "That is just how men are treated like monkeys," answered Gordon. "First they are beaten, and then made to dance!" The Simple Soul, in accord with his character, which was always showing increasing greatness of spirit, slowly tore the letter to pieces and threw them in the messenger's face: "There is my answer." His uncle was scared and thought thunder and twenty *lettres de cachet* would drop on him. He quickly wrote a note excusing as well as he could what he took for a youth's hot-headedness and which in reality was the act of a great soul.

But more sorrowful cares claimed the attention of all hearts. The lovely and luckless Saint Yves felt her end drawing near; she was calm, but it was that frightful calm of exhausted nature that has no more strength left for fighting. "O my dear lover!" she said with failing voice. "Death is punishing me for my weakness; but I die with the comfort of knowing you are free. I loved you in the moment I betrayed you, and I love you now as I say my last, everlasting, farewell." She did not make a show of vain fortitude; she did not think of the miserable glory of a few neighbours being told that she died bravely. Who at the age of twenty can lose life, lover and what is called "honour" without regret and anguish? She felt all the horror of her condition, and with those dying words and looks that speak so forcibly made the others feel it too.

Let others try to praise the ostentatious deaths of those who go to annihilation without a qualm: it is the lot of all animals. We shall not die as they die, indifferently, until age and illness have made us their equals in the obtuseness of our vital organs. Whoever suffers a great loss regrets it deeply; if he stifles his regret, it is only that he carries his vanity right into the jaws of death.

When the fatal moment came everyone present cried out loud and wept. The Simple Soul lost his head. Strong souls in love have emotions more violent than

those of other people. The good Gordon knew him well enough to fear that when he had regained his senses he might kill himself. All arms were locked away ; the young man saw what was being done ; without tears, sighs or emotion he turned to Gordon and to his relatives. "Do you think," he said, "there is anyone on earth who has the power or the right to prevent my ending my life ? "

Gordon was careful not to lay before him the ordinary tedious grounds on which people try to prove that one is not allowed to use one's liberty to end one's existence when one is sore stricken, that one must not leave one's house when one can no longer live in it, that man is on earth as a soldier at his post : as if it mattered to the Being of beings that the assemblage of a few particles of matter were in one place rather than another ; impotent reasons that a firm and considered despair despairs to hear, and to which Cato gave no reply but a thrust with his dagger.

The Simple Soul's mournful and terrible silence, his sad eyes, trembling hands, the shaking of his body, brought into the souls of those who saw him that mingled terror and pity that holds all the soul's forces in leash, that debars speech and can show itself only in broken, semi-articulate words. The hostess and her family had come in ; everyone trembled at his despair, and watched every movement he made. Already the lovely Saint Yves' cold body had been taken into a lower room, far from the eyes of the lover who seemed to seek her still, although he was no longer in a state to see anything.

In the middle of this spectacle of death, while the body was on view at the door of the house, and two priests beside a bowl of holy water absent-mindedly said prayers ; while passers-by idly sprinkled a few drops of holy water on the bier, and others indifferently went on their respective ways ; while the relatives were weeping, and a lover was at the point of breaking away once and for all

from life, Saint Pouange arrived with the lady from Versailles.

His passing taste having been satisfied but once had turned to love. The refusal of his favours had piqued him. Father La Chaise would never have thought of coming to this house, but Saint Pouange, having the lovely Saint Yves' image before his eyes all day and every day, burned to satisfy a passion which in its one short gratification had plunged the sharp spur of desire in his heart, and he did not hesitate to come himself in search of a woman he would not have wanted to see three times in all had she come to him of her own accord.

He got out of his coach ; the first thing he saw was a bier ; he turned his eyes away with the simple distaste of a man nurtured on pleasure who thinks he should be spared every sight that might make him think of human suffering. He wished to enter the house. The lady from Versailles asked out of curiosity who was being buried ; Mademoiselle Saint Yves, she was told. At this name she paled and uttered a fearful cry ; Saint Pouange turned round ; surprise and sorrow filled his soul. The good Gordon was there. He interrupted his mournful prayers to tell the courtier all about this terrible catastrophe. He spoke with that authority that sorrow and virtue give. Saint Pouange was not born vicious ; the torrent of work and pleasure had carried away his soul before he realised he had one. He was nowhere near old age which usually hardens ministers' hearts ; he listened to Gordon, his eyes cast down, and wiped away a tear he was astonished to find himself shedding : he made the acquaintance of repentance.

“I must see this extraordinary man of whom you speak,” he said. “He makes me almost as sad as this innocent victim of whose death I have been the cause.” Gordon followed him to the room where the Prior, Mademoiselle Kerkabon, Father Saint Yves and some of the

neighbours were bringing back the fainting young man to life.

"I am the cause of your misfortune," said the under-minister, "I will give my life to repair it."

The Simple Soul's first idea was to kill him, and to kill himself afterwards. Nothing was more fitting ; but he was unarmed and closely watched. Saint Pouange refused to be rebuffed by the refusals and the reproaches, the scorn and the loathing he had merited, and which they poured on him.

Time heals everything. Master de Louvois succeeded in making an excellent officer of the Simple Soul, who appeared at Paris and in the army under another name with the approval of all honourable men ; he was at once a warrior and a daring philosopher.

He never spoke of this sad adventure without being deeply affected, and yet to speak of it was a comfort to him. He cherished the memory of the gentle Saint Yves up to the last moment of his life. Father Saint Yves and the Prior were each given a good living ; the good dame Kerkabon preferred seeing her nephew with military honours than with those of the subdeaconry. The devout lady of Versailles kept the diamond ear-rings, and received a handsome present in addition. Father Tout-à-tous had some boxes of chocolate, coffee, sugar-candy and preserved lemon-peel, together with the "Meditations of the Reverend Father Croiset" and "The Flower of the Saints" (13) bound in morocco. The good Gordon lived with the Simple Soul in the closest friendship until his dying day ; he, too, had a living, and forgot for ever grace both efficacious and concomitant. He took as his motto—*Misfortune is good for something*. How many good people in this world have been able to say—*Misfortune is good for nothing* !





THE PRINCESS OF BABYLON

(1768)

CHAPTER I



GED Belus, King of Babylon, thought himself the first man in the world, for all his courtiers told him so, and his historiographers proved it to him. What may possibly excuse his ridiculous idea is that his predecessors had certainly built Babylon more than thirty thousand years before him, and that he had improved it. Everyone knows that his palace and his park a few parasangs (1) outside Babylon stretched from the Tigris to the Euphrates, which bathed this enchanted river-side spot. His vast house with its façade three thousand paces long touched the clouds ; its flat roof had a white marble balustrade fifty feet high which bore colossal statues of all the kings and great men of the empire. This roof was composed of two rows of bricks covered from end to end with a thick layer of lead on which had been spread twelve feet of earth ; on this earth had been grown forests of olive-trees, lemon-trees, orange-trees, palms, clove-trees, cocoanut palms, and cinnamon bushes, which were arranged in avenues into which the sun's rays could not penetrate.

The waters of the Euphrates, pumped through a

hundred hollow pillars, filled huge marble basins in the gardens and then, falling back through other channels, went into the park, where they formed cascades six thousand feet long with a hundred thousand fountains that played so high they could barely be seen ; thence they returned to the Euphrates whence they had come. The gardens of Semiramis that amazed Asia several centuries later were but a faint imitation of these ancient marvels ; for in the time of Semiramis everything to do with men and women started to degenerate.

What, however, was most admirable in Babylon and eclipsed all the rest was the king's only daughter, by name Formosante. It was upon her portraits and statues that Praxiteles centuries later modelled his Aphrodite and the statue that was called "The Venus with the Beautiful Buttocks." Heavens ! what a difference between the original and the copies ! Belus was prouder of his daughter than he was of his kingdom. She was eighteen years old : she must have a husband worthy of her ; but where could he be found ? An ancient oracle had commanded that Formosante should belong to none but him who should bend Nimrod's bow. This Nimrod, great hunter in the eyes of God, had left a bow seven Babylonian feet long, made of ebony harder than the Caucasian iron that is forged in the forges of Derbent ; and no mortal, from the time of Nimrod, had been able to draw this marvellous bow.

It was said further that the arm that bent this bow would also kill the most terrible and dangerous lion loosed in the arena of Babylon. That was not all : the bender of the bow, the conqueror of the lion, had to beat all his rivals ; but particularly must he have a great deal of wit, be the most magnificent man and the most virtuous, and possess the rarest thing there was on the whole earth.

Three kings who dared fight for possession of Formosante presented themselves ; they were the Pharaoh of

Egypt, the Shah of the Indies and the Khan of the Scythians. Belus appointed a day and fixed for the combat a spot at the end of the park, in the vast space that was bordered by the united waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates. Around the field was erected a marble amphitheatre which could hold five hundred thousand spectators. Opposite the amphitheatre was the throne of His Majesty the King, who would appear with Formosante accompanied by the whole court. On the right and on the left, between the throne and the amphitheatre, were other thrones and other seats for the three kings and all the other sovereigns who would be curious to see this awe-inspiring ceremony.

The King of Egypt arrived first, mounted on the bull Apis and carrying the sistrum of Isis in his hand. He was followed by two thousand priests clad in linen robes that were whiter than snow, by two thousand eunuchs, two thousand magicians and two thousand warriors.

The King of the Indies arrived soon after in a chariot drawn by twelve elephants. He had a retinue still more brilliant and numerous than the Pharaoh of Egypt.

The last to appear was the King of the Scythians. With him he had none but chosen warriors armed with bows and arrows. His mount was a superb tiger which he had tamed ; it was as tall as the most beautiful Persian horses. This monarch's form, imposing and majestic, quite eclipsed those of his rivals ; his bare arms, as brawny as they were white, seemed already to be bending Nimrod's bow.

The three kings first of all bowed low before Belus and Formosante. The King of Egypt offered the princess two of the most beautiful Nile crocodiles, two hippopotamuses, two zebras, two ichneumons and two mummies, with the books of the great Hermes which he considered were the rarest things on the earth.

The King of the Indies offered her a hundred elephants,

each bearing a tower of gilded wood, and laid at her feet the *Veda* written in Xaca's own hand.

The King of the Scythians, who could neither read nor write, presented a hundred chargers covered with black-fox saddle-cloths.

The princess dropped her eyes before her suitors, and bowed with a grace as modest as it was dignified.

Belus had these monarchs conducted to the thrones that had been prepared for them. "If only I had three daughters," he said to them, "I should to-day make six people happy." He then had lots drawn as to who should be the first to try Nimrod's bow. The names of the three claimants were put in a golden casque. The King of Egypt's came out first, then followed the King of the Indies. The Scythian King, looking at the bow and at his rivals, was not at all sorry to be the third.

While preparations were being made for these glorious trials, twenty thousand pages and twenty thousand young girls quietly went between the seats distributing refreshments to the spectators. Everybody avowed that the gods had invented kings for the sole purpose of having feast-days every day, always providing there should be variety of amusement ; that life is too short to be wasted in any other way, that the law-suits, wars, intrigues and clerical disputes that fill human life are absurd and horrible things ; that man was born for joy ; that he would not have a perpetual passionate love of pleasure had he not been made for pleasure ; that the most vital thing in human nature is to enjoy oneself, and all the rest is folly. Nothing but the facts give the lie to this excellent ethical code.

As the trials that would decide the fate of Formosante were about to begin, an unknown youth mounted on a unicorn, accompanied by his servant similarly mounted, and carrying a big bird on his wrist, presented himself at the barrier. The guards were surprised to see in this equipage a figure that had something in it of the divine.

It was, as has been said since, the face of Adonis on the frame of Hercules, majesty arm-in-arm with grace. His black eyebrows and long fair hair, a blend of handsome features unknown in Babylon, charmed the crowd ; everyone in the amphitheatre stood up the better to see ; all the women of the court fixed marvelling eyes on him ; even Formosante, who always lowered her eyes, raised them and blushed ; the three kings paled : all the spectators, comparing Formosante with the unknown, cried—“ This is the only young man in the world as beautiful as the princess.”

The stewards, overcome with astonishment, asked if he were a king. The stranger replied that he had not that honour, but that he had come from a great distance out of curiosity to see if there were any kings worthy of Formosante. He was conducted to the first row of the amphitheatre with his servant, his two unicorns and his bird. He bowed deeply to Belus, his daughter, the three kings and the whole assemblage, and then took his place blushing. His two unicorns stretched themselves at his feet, his bird perched on his shoulder, and his servant who was carrying a little bag sat beside him.

The trials began. Nimrod’s bow was drawn out of its golden case. The grand master of ceremonies, followed by fifty pages and preceded by twenty trumpeters, presented it to the King of Egypt, who had it blessed by his priests ; and having placed it on the head of the bull Apis he had no doubts as to his carrying off this first victory. He went down into the middle of the arena, tried, exhausted his strength, twisted himself into contortions that excited the amphitheatre’s laughter, and made even Formosante smile.

His grand almoner approached him—“ May it please Your Majesty,” he said, “ to renounce this vain honour that is but one of sinew and muscle ; You will triumph in the rest of the contest : You will vanquish the lion, because you carry the sabre of Osiris. The princess of

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He exhausted his Strength

Babylon is to belong to the prince with the most wit, and you have guessed riddles ; she is to marry the most virtuous man, you are he because you have been brought up by the priests of Egypt ; the most generous man is to carry her off, and you have given her the two most lovely crocodiles and the two finest ichneumons in the Delta ; you own the bull Apis and the book of Hermes, which are the rarest things in the universe ; nobody can dispute your right to Formosante."

" You are right," said the King of Egypt ; and he returned to his throne.

The bow was placed in the hands of the King of the Indies. He had blisters on them for the next fifteen days, and consoled himself with assuming that the King of the Scythians would have no better luck.

In his turn the Scythian handled the bow. To his strength he added skill ; in his hands the bow seemed to acquire a certain elasticity ; he made it bend a little, but he never succeeded in drawing it. The amphitheatre, in which this prince's pleasant features inspired a favourable bias, groaned at his want of success, and judged the lovely princess would never be married.

Then the young unknown came down into the arena with a bound, and addressing the King of the Scythians— " Let not Your Majesty be surprised," he said, " at not having been entirely successful. These ebony bows are made in my country ; one only has to give them a certain twist ; you merit much more in having bent it than I can do in drawing it." Immediately, he took an arrow, fixed it on the cord, bent the bow of Nimrod and sent the arrow flying right beyond the barrier. A million hands applauded this miracle. Babylon re-echoed with their cheers, and all the women said : " How fortunate that such a good-looking boy is so strong ! "

He then drew from his pocket a little ivory plate, wrote on it with a gold needle, attached the ivory tablet to the bow, and presented the whole to the princess with a

grace that enchanted everyone present. Then he returned modestly to his place between his bird and his servant. The whole of Babylon was on tenter-hooks ; the three kings were utterly confounded, and the unknown did not seem to notice it.

Formosante was still more surprised to read on the ivory tablet attached to the bow these little verses in beautiful Chaldean :—

“ Nimrod’s bow is the bow of War,
And Love’s bow is the bow of bliss ;
You hold it. This god conqueror
Through you the whole world vanquishes.
Three potent rivals, three great kings,
Dare claim the mark of your esteem :
To whomsoe’er your pleasure swings,
The universe will envy him.”

This little madrigal did not displease the princess at all. It was criticised by several grandes of the old court, who said that in the good old times Belus would have been likened to the sun and Formosante to the moon, her neck to a tower and her breast to a bushel of wheat. They said the stranger had no imagination, that he did not keep to the rules of true poetry. But all the ladies thought his verses very gallant. They marvelled that a man who could draw a bow so well should have so much wit. The princess’s lady-in-waiting said to her :— “ Madam, here is pure waste of talent, of what use will his wit and Belus’ bow be to this young man ? ”

“ To make him admired,” answered Formosante.

“ Ah ! ” muttered the lady-in-waiting between her teeth, “ another madrigal and maybe she will be in love with him.”

Meanwhile Belus, who had consulted his Magi, announced that although none of the three kings had been able to draw Nimrod’s bow, his daughter had to be married none the less, and that she should belong to the

man who succeeded in beating the great lion that was being bred in the menagerie for this express purpose.

The King of Egypt, who had been educated in all his country's wisdom, thought it very ridiculous to expose a king to wild beasts in order to marry him. He admitted that to possess Formosante was a great prize, but he contended that if the lion killed him he could never marry the beautiful Babylonian maid. The King of the Indies held the same view as the King of Egypt ; they both thought the King of Babylon was making fun of them, that someone would have to send an army to punish him, and that both of them had sufficient subjects who would consider themselves highly honoured to die in their masters' service without it costing their masters one hair of their sacred heads ; that they could easily dethrone the King of Babylon, and that when they had done so they would draw lots for lovely Formosante.

When they had come to this agreement, the two kings sent express orders to each of their countries for the gathering together of an army of three hundred thousand men for the purpose of carrying Formosante off.

Meanwhile the King of the Scythians went down into the arena alone with his scimitar in his hand. He was not desperately smitten with Formosante's charms ; up to date glory had been his sole passion ; and it was glory had brought him to Babylon. He wanted to show that if the Kings of Egypt and the Indies were too prudent to compromise themselves with the lions, he at any rate was brave enough not to despise such a combat, and that he would restore the honour of the diadem. His rare courage did not allow him to use his tiger's help even. He went forward alone, lightly armed, his head covered by a steel helmet decorated with gold and shaded by three horses' tails as white as snow.

The biggest lion that was ever bred in the mountains of Eastern Lebanon was let loose against him. Its terrible claws seemed capable of rending three kings at once, and

its vast jaws of devouring them. Its frightful roars made the amphitheatre re-echo. The two proud champions swiftly hurled themselves at each other. The brave Scythian drove his sword into the lion's throat, but the point met one of its thick teeth that nothing could pierce, and was shivered to splinters; the king of the forest, maddened with the wound, was already fixing its bloody claws in the king's flank when the young unknown, touched by such a brave prince's peril, rushed into the arena as quickly as lightning, and cut off the lion's head with the same dexterity as has since been seen among our adroit knights. Then, taking out a little box, he presented it to the King of the Scythians. "In this little box," he said, "Your Majesty will find some of the genuine dittany that grows in my country. Your glorious wounds will be healed in an instant. Luck alone has hindered your triumphing over the lion; your courage is none the less marvellous."

The Scythian king, touched more by gratitude than by vanity, thanked his deliverer, and after tenderly embracing him returned to his quarters to apply dittany to his wounds.

The unknown gave the lion's head to his servant, who washed it in the great fountain beneath the amphitheatre and, having drained out all the blood, pulled out the lion's forty teeth with an iron he took from his little bag, and put diamonds of equal size in their place.

His master returned to his seat with his habitual modesty. He gave the lion's head to his bird. "Beautiful bird," he said, "carry this small mark of homage to Formosante's feet." The bird flew away with this terrible trophy in one of its claws; it presented it to the princess with a humble inclination of its neck as it cringed before her. The forty diamonds dazzled all eyes. Such magnificence was as yet unknown in splendid Babylon: the emerald, topaz, sapphire and carbuncle were still looked on as the most precious jewels. Belus

and the whole court were dumbfounded with admiration. The bird which offered this gift astonished them still more. It was like an eagle, but its eyes were as soft and gentle as an eagle's are proud and threatening. Its beak was rose-coloured and seemed to have something of Formosante's lovely mouth. Its neck was of all the colours of the rainbow mingled, but more brilliant and vivid. A thousand shades of gold shone on its plumage. Its feet seemed of silver and purple mixed ; and the tails of the lovely birds that have been harnessed since to Juno's chariot did not approach this bird's tail for beauty.

The attention, curiosity, amazement and ecstasy of the entire court were torn between the diamonds and the bird. It perched on the balustrade between Belus and Formosante ; she stroked it, fondled it, kissed it. It seemed to accept her caresses with mingled pleasure and respect. When the princess kissed it, it returned the kisses and then looked at her with affectionate eyes. It took some biscuits and pistachios from her with its purple and silver claw, and bore them to its beak with inexpressible grace.

Belus, who had been carefully considering the diamonds, came to the conclusion that one of his provinces could barely afford so rich a present. He ordered to be prepared for the young unknown gifts still more magnificent than those destined for the three kings. "This young man," he said, "is doubtless the son of the King of China or of that part of the world that is called Europe, of which I have heard speak, or of Africa, which is I believe near the kingdom of Egypt."

He at once sent his Master of the Horse to compliment the unknown and ask him if he were king of one of these empires and why, seeing he was possessor of such amazing treasures, he had come with only one servant and a small bag.

While the Master of the Horse was on his way to the amphitheatre to fulfil his mission, another servant ar-

rived on a unicorn. This servant spoke to the young man. "Ormar," he said, "your father is at the point of death and I have come to warn you of it." The unknown raised his eyes to the sky, wept, and said but three words—"Let us depart."

The Master of the Horse having delivered Belus' compliments to the lion's conqueror, to the donor of the forty diamonds and the master of the beautiful bird, asked the servant the kingdom of which this young hero's father was sovereign. The servant answered: "His father is an old shepherd who is very much loved in the district."

During this short conversation the unknown had already mounted his unicorn. He turned to the Master of the Horse. "My lord," he said, "deign to make my obeisances to Belus and his daughter. I dare beg her to take great care of the bird I leave her; it is as unique as she is." As he said these words the unicorn shot forward like a shaft of lightning; the two servants followed and were lost to sight.

Formosante could not restrain a great cry. The bird turned towards the amphitheatre where its master had been seated and seemed very sad not to see him. Then, with its eyes fixed on the princess, it gently rubbed her hand with its beak, and appeared to dedicate itself to her service.

Belus, in greater astonishment than ever, learned that this young man was a shepherd's son and could not believe it. He sent messengers after him at post-haste, but news soon came back that the unicorns on which the men were galloping could not be overtaken, and at the speed they were travelling should cover a hundred leagues a day.





CHAPTER II

ERYONE discussed this strange adventure and exhausted themselves in vain conjecture. How could a shepherd's son give forty big diamonds away? Why was he mounted on a unicorn? They lost themselves in speculation, and Formosante caressed her bird plunged in profound reverie.

Her first cousin, Princess Aldée, a well-made girl nearly as lovely as she was, said to her—"Cousin, I do not know if this young demi-god is a shepherd's son, but as far as I can see he has fulfilled all the conditions attached to your marriage. He has drawn Nimrod's bow, and conquered the lion; he has plenty of wit, seeing that he composed a pretty enough impromptu verse for you. After the forty diamonds he gave you, you cannot deny he is the most generous of men. In his bird he has one of the rarest things in the world. His virtue is unequalled, seeing that he could have stayed by your side, but that without second thought he left at once to see his sick father. The oracle is satisfied on all points except the one that demands he should vanquish his rivals; but he has done even more, he has saved the life of the only competitor he could fear, and when the question arises of beating the other two I do not think you need have any doubts as to his easy success."

"All you say is very true," answered Formosante, "but is it possible for the greatest, and maybe the most lovable, man to be a shepherd's son?"

The lady-in-waiting joining in the conversation said that very often the word shepherd was applied to kings, that they were called "shepherds" because they clip their flocks very close, that it was doubtless a poor joke on the servant's part, that the young man had come with such a meagre retinue but to show how much his merit alone was above the king's pageantry, and so that he might owe Formosante to nothing but himself. The only reply the princess made was to give her bird a thousand affectionate kisses.

Meanwhile, a great feast was being prepared for the three kings and all the princes who had come to the festival. The king's daughter and niece were to preside. Presents worthy of the magnificence of Babylon were taken to the kings. While waiting for the banquet to be served, Belus assembled his council for the discussion of lovely Formosante's marriage, and addressed them in his capacity of a great statesman.

"I am old," he said, "and know no longer what to do nor to whom to give my daughter. The man who deserved her is nothing but a vile shepherd; the King of Egypt and the King of the Indies are cowards; the King of the Scythians pleases me well enough, but he has fulfilled none of the conditions. I am going to consult the oracle again. Meanwhile deliberate, and we will come to a decision when the oracle has spoken. A king must always be guided by the express orders of the immortal gods."

He went to his chapel forthwith; the oracle answered him in very few words, as was its custom—"Thy daughter will not be married until she has travelled all over the world." Belus was amazed, and returned to the council with this reply.

All the ministers had a profound respect for oracles;

they all agreed, or pretended to agree, that oracles were the foundation-stones of religion ; that reason must keep silence before them ; that it is through them that kings reign over nations, and priests over kings ; that without oracles there would be neither peace nor virtue on earth. Finally, after demonstrating the most profound reverence for oracles in general, they all decided that this one in particular was exceeding impudent and should not be obeyed ; that nothing was more unbecoming for a girl, and especially for a girl who was the King of Babylon's daughter, to gad about the world heaven knew where ; that that was the real way not to get married, or to contract a clandestine marriage, a shameful marriage, a ridiculous marriage ; in a word, that this oracle was lacking in common sense.

The youngest of the ministers, Onadase by name, who had more wit than the others, said the oracle doubtless was indicating some pilgrimage, and he offered himself as the princess's guide and guard. The council came over to his way of thinking, but each minister wanted to serve the princess as squire. The king decided that the princess should go three hundred parasangs on the road to Arabia to a temple, the patron saint of which had the reputation of procuring happy marriages for girls, and that the dean of the council should accompany her. This decision made, they all went to sup.





CHAPTER III

FROM the middle of the gardens, between two cascades, rose an oval salon three hundred feet in diameter. Its blue vaulted roof was sown with golden stars representing all the constellations and the planets each in its right place. This vault revolved by means of machinery as invisible as that which controls the movements of the heavens. A hundred thousand wax lights in rock-crystal cylinders lit the banqueting-hall inside and out ; a tiered sideboard carried twenty thousand golden vessels and dishes, and opposite the sideboard were other tiers filled with musicians. There were two other amphitheatres, one charged with fruit of all seasons, the other with crystal amphoras, where glistened all the wines of the world.

The guests took their seats round a table divided into compartments representing flowers and fruit all in precious stones. Lovely Formosante sat between the Kings of Egypt and the Indies, lovely Aldée beside the King of the Scythians. There were about thirty princes, and each was seated next to one of the most lovely ladies of the palace. The King of Babylon was seated in the middle, opposite his daughter, and seemed torn between grief at being unable to marry his daughter and joy at being still able to keep her. Formosante asked his per-

mission to put her bird on the table beside her. The king was much pleased with the idea.

The music gave each prince complete liberty to talk to his neighbour. The banquet seemed as pleasant as it was splendid. A ragout of which her royal father was very fond was placed before Formosante. The princess said it should be placed before His Majesty ; immediately the bird seized the dish with marvellous dexterity and presented it to the king. Never was anyone at supper more astonished. Belus fondled the bird as much as did his daughter. The bird then flew back beside her. In its flight it spread such a lovely tail, its opened wings showed such an array of brilliant colours, its golden plumage threw so dazzling a light, that all eyes were turned to it. All the musicians stopped playing and stayed motionless. Nobody ate, nobody spoke : the only sound was a murmur of admiration. The Princess of Babylon kissed the bird throughout the banquet, without dreaming there were such things as kings in the world. The sovereigns of Egypt and the Indies felt their indignation and annoyance redouble, and both promised themselves to hasten the march of their three hundred thousand men of vengeance.

As regards the King of the Scythians, he was occupied in talking to lovely Aldée : without being annoyed, his proud heart despised Formosante for her inattention, and regarded her more with indifference than anger. "I admit she is lovely," he said ; "but she seems to me to be one of those women who think of nothing but their beauty and believe that the whole human race should feel itself under an obligation to them when they show themselves in public. We do not worship idols in my country. I would rather have a plain girl who was complaisant than this beautiful statue. You, madam, are as attractive as she is, and at least you condescend to talk to strangers. I confess to you with Scythian frankness that I would give you the preference over your cousin."

He was mistaken, however, over Formosante's character ; she was not so scornful as she appeared ; but his compliment pleased Princess Aldée immensely. Their talk became very interesting : they were both very content and already sure of one another when they rose from table.

After supper everyone went to stroll in the groves. Aldée and the King of the Scythians did not fail to find a lonely summer-house. Aldée, who was frankness itself, spoke as follows to this prince :

"I do not hate my cousin in the least," she said, "although she is more beautiful than I am and is destined to be Queen of Babylon : the honour of pleasing you is compensation for the charms I lack. I prefer Scythia with you to the crown of Babylon without you ; but this crown is rightfully mine, if there are any rights in the world, for I come of the elder branch of Nimrod, and Formosante comes of the younger only. Her grandfather dethroned mine and killed him."

"So blood is not thicker than water in the house of Babylon, then !" said the Scythian. "What was your grandfather's name ?"

"Aldée, the same as mine : my father had the same name : he was banished to the depths of the empire with my mother, and after their death Belus, fearing nothing from me, wished to bring me up with his daughter ; but he has decided I shall never be married."

"I will avenge your father, your grandfather and you," said the King of the Scythians. "I will answer for your being married ; I shall carry you off the day after to-morrow early in the morning, for I have to dine to-morrow with the King of Babylon, and I shall return with an army of three hundred thousand men to maintain your rights."

"That will be lovely," said beautiful Aldée ; and after pledging their word of honour they parted.

Matchless Formosante had long been in bed. Beside her bed she had had an orange-tree in a silver case placed,

for her bird to rest in. Her curtains were drawn, but she had no desire to sleep ; her imagination and her heart were too wide awake. She saw the charming unknown before her, he was shooting an arrow with Nimrod's bow ; she watched him cut off the lion's head ; she repeated his madrigal : and finally she saw him escape from the crowd on his unicorn's back ; she burst out sobbing. "I shall never see him again," she wept ; "I know he will never come back."

"He will come back, madam," answered the bird from the top of the orange-tree : "is it possible to see you once and not to see you again ?"

"O heaven !" cried the princess, "eternal powers ! my bird speaks pure Chaldean !" As she said these words she drew back the curtains, stretched out her arms to the bird and kneeled on her bed. "Are you a god come down to earth ? Are you the great Ormuzd hidden beneath this lovely plumage ? If you are a god, give me back this beautiful young man."

"I am but a winged creature," said the other, "but I was born at the time when all the animals still spoke, and birds, snakes, she-donkeys, horses and griffons communed intimately with mankind. I did not want to speak before everyone, for fear your ladies-in-waiting should take me for a sorcerer : I do not wish to reveal myself to anyone but you."

Formosante, dumbfounded, bewildered, intoxicated with so many marvels, agitated with eagerness to ask a hundred questions all at once, asked the bird first of all how old it was.

"Twenty-seven thousand nine hundred years and six months, madam. I am as old as that small revolution of the heavens that your Magi call the 'Precession of the Equinoxes' and which is effected in about twenty-eight thousand of your years. There are infinitely longer revolutions, and there are many beings much older than I am. I learned Chaldean twenty-two thousand years ago

in one of my travels ; I have always had a great liking for the Chaldean language, but my colleagues the other animals have given up talking in your climate."

" Why, divine bird ? "

" I am sorry to say that it is because men have got into the habit of eating us, instead of talking to us and increasing their stock of knowledge. The savages ! Could they not be satisfied that, seeing we had the same organs as they had, the same emotions, needs, desires, we had also just like them what is called a ' soul ' ; that we were their brothers, and that only the wicked should be killed and eaten ? We are so much your brothers that the great Being, the eternal Creator, having made a covenant with mankind, expressly included us in it (2). He forbade you to nourish yourselves on our blood and us to suck yours.

" The fables of your ancient Lokman, translated into so many languages, will bear eternal witness to the happy intercourse you had with us once upon a time. They begin with these words—' In the time when the beasts spoke ' (3). It is true there are many women among you who still speak to their dogs, but the dogs are determined not to reply since the time when they were forced with blows of the whip to go hunting and be accomplices in the murder of our former common friends, the stags, the deer, the hares and the partridges.

" You have poems still more ancient in which horses speak, and your coachmen speak to them every day ; but so roughly and with such infamous words that the horses that once upon a time loved you dearly to-day loathe you.

" The land where your charming unknown, the most perfect of men, lives is the only land in which your species still loves ours and speaks to it ; and it is the only country in the world where men are just."

" And where is my dear unknown's country ? what is name ? what is the name of his empire ?

for I no more believe he is a shepherd than I believe you are a bat."

" His country, madam, is that of the Gangarides, a virtuous and invincible race that lives on the right bank of the river Ganges. My friend's name is Amazan. He is not king, and I don't know that he would even lower himself to be king ; he loves his compatriots too much : he is, like them, a shepherd. But do not run away with the idea that those shepherds resemble yours who, barely covered with worn-out rags, look after sheep that are infinitely better dressed than they are themselves, who groan beneath the burden of their poverty, and who pay an extortioner half the miserable wage they receive from their masters. The shepherds of the Gangarides, all born equal, own the countless flocks that cover their eternally flower-strewn meadows. The flocks are never killed ; by the Ganges it is a horrible crime to kill and eat one's fellow-creature. Their wool, which is finer and more lustrous than silk, is the biggest trade in the Orient. Besides, the land of the Gangarides produces all the heart of man can desire. Those great diamonds that Amazan had the honour of offering you come from a mine he owns. That unicorn you saw him mount, is the Gangarides' ordinary mount. It is the most lovely, proud, terrible and gentle animal that adorns the earth. A hundred Gangarides and a hundred unicorns would suffice to rout countless armies. About two centuries ago one of the Kings of the Indies was mad enough to want to conquer this nation ; he was followed by ten thousand elephants and a million warriors. The unicorns transfix the elephants as on your table I have seen larks transfixed with golden skewers. The warriors fell beneath the Gangarides' sabres just as the rice harvest is cut by the hands of the people of the East. The king was taken prisoner with more than six hundred thousand men. He was washed in the health-giving waters of the Ganges, and he was put on the diet of the country, which

consists in living on the vegetables that nature has lavished for the nourishment of all that breathe. Men fed on flesh and steeped in strong liquors all have bitter, fiery blood that makes them mad in a hundred ways. Their principal dementia is their frenzy for shedding their brothers' blood, and for devastating fertile plains so that they may rule over cemeteries. Six months were spent in curing the King of the Indies of his malady. When at last the doctors judged that his pulse was quieter and his blood cooler, they gave a certificate to that effect to the council of the Gangarides. This council, having taken the advice of the unicorns, sent the King of the Indies back to his own country with great humanity, accompanied by his silly court and his idiotic warriors. This lesson made them wise, and from that time the Indians have respected the Gangarides, just as the ignorant who wish to increase their knowledge respect among your people the Chaldean philosophers they cannot equal."

"By the way, my dear bird," interrupted the princess, "have the Gangarides any religion?"

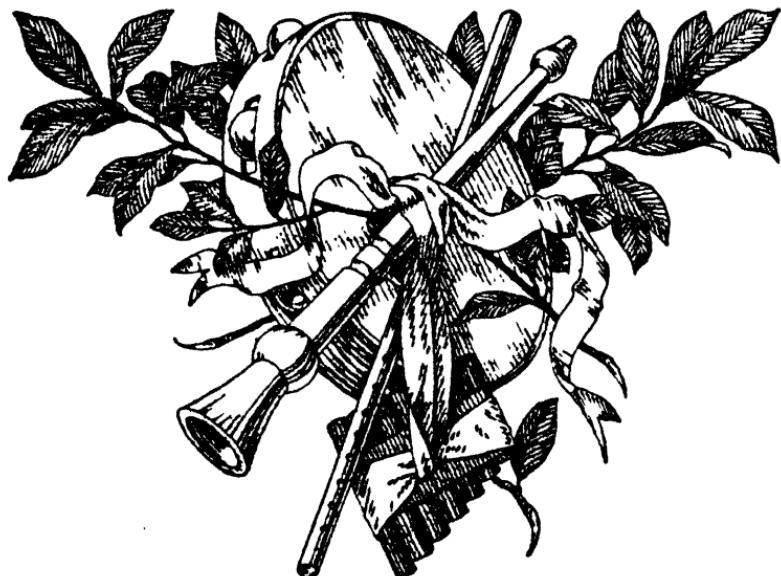
"Have they any religion? On the days of full moon we gather together to return thanks to God, the men in one great cedar temple, the women in another, for fear their minds may wander; all the birds in one grove, the quadrupeds on a lovely lawn; we thank God for all His beneficence. We have above all some parrots that preach marvellously well."

"Such is the country of my dear Amazan; it is there I live; I have as much friendship for him as the love he has inspired in you. If you believe me we will set off together, and you shall pay him a return visit."

"Really, my bird, you have a very pleasant calling," said the princess smiling; she was burning with envy to make the journey, but did not dare admit it.

"I serve my friend," replied the bird, "and after the happiness of loving you the next greatest happiness is to serve your love affairs."

Formosante no longer knew where she was ; she thought herself transported beyond the world. All she had seen that day, all she saw, all she heard, and above all, all she felt in her heart plunged her in a rapture that far surpassed that which the fortunate Mussulman feels to-day when, freed from his terrestrial bonds, he sees himself in the ninth heaven in the arms of his houris, surrounded by glory and steeped in the happiness of heaven.





CHAPTER IV

SHE passed the whole night talking of Amazan. She no longer spoke of him as anything but her "shepherd"; and it is from that time that among some nations the names "shepherd" and "lover" have been interchangeable.

Soon she asked the bird if Amazan had had other mistresses. It answered in the negative, and she was in the height of joy. Then she wanted to know how he passed his life; and she learned with delight that he spent his time doing good, in cultivating the arts, in probing nature's secrets and in making himself more perfect. Then she was curious to learn if the bird's soul was of the same nature as her lover's: why it had lived nearly twenty-eight thousand years whereas her lover was only eighteen or nineteen years old. She posed a hundred similar questions which the bird answered with a discretion that stirred her curiosity. Sleep closed their eyes at last, and handed Formosante over to the sweet illusion of dreams sent by the gods, which surpass even reality sometimes and which all the philosophy of the Chaldeans has great difficulty in explaining.

Formosante did not wake till very late. She was just getting up when her father the king entered. The bird received his majesty with respectful politeness, walked in front of him and fluttered its wings, stretched its neck and went back to its orange-tree. The king seated him-

self on his daughter's bed ; her dreams had made her still more beautiful. His long beard drew near the lovely face and when he had given her two kisses, he spoke to her.

“ My dear daughter,” he said, “ you were not able to find a husband yesterday as I hoped : nevertheless you must have one ; the safety of my empire demands it. I have consulted the oracle which as you know never lies, and which governs all my acts ; it has ordered me to send you travelling all over the world. You must take a journey.”

“ Ah ! to the land of the Gangarides, doubtless,” said the princess, realising as she spoke that she had made a foolish remark. The king, who knew not a word of geography, asked her what she meant by the Gangarides. The princess found a facile evasion. The king told her she had to make a pilgrimage, that he had selected the persons for her suite, the dean of the councillors of state, the grand-almoner, one lady-in-waiting, a doctor, an apothecary and her bird, together with all the servants proper.

Formosante, who had never left her father the king's palace, and up to the day of the three kings and Amazan had led but a very insipid life in the etiquette of pomp and the semblance of pleasure, was enchanted at having to make a pilgrimage. “ Who knows,” she whispered to her heart, “ if the gods will not inspire my dear Gangaride with a desire to go to the same chapel, and if I shall not have the good fortune to see my pilgrim again ? ” She thanked her father tenderly, telling him she had always had a secret devotion to the saint to whom she was being sent.

Belus gave an excellent dinner to his guests ; only men were present, and they were a very badly assorted lot. Kings, princes, ministers, pontiffs, all jealous of one another, all weighing their words, all embarrassed by their neighbours and by themselves. Although everyone

drank a great deal, it was a dismal repast. The princesses stayed in their apartments, each occupied with her departure. They ate in their little arbour. Formosante went for a walk afterwards with her dear bird, which to amuse itself flew from tree to tree spreading its splendid tail and divine plumage.

The King of Egypt, who was warm with wine, not to say drunk, asked one of his pages for a bow and arrows. This prince was in truth the clumsiest archer in his kingdom. When he aimed at the target the place of greatest safety was the spot he was striving to hit, but the beautiful bird flying as swiftly as the arrow received the blow itself and fell bleeding into Formosante's arms. The Egyptian with a silly laugh returned to his quarters. The princess rent the air with her cries, burst into tears and beat her cheeks and breast. The dying bird whispered to her—"Burn me and do not fail to bear my ashes towards Arabia Felix to the east of the ancient city of Aden or Eden, and to expose them to the sun on a little pyre of clove and cinnamon." Having uttered these words it died. Formosante fainted and remained a long time in this state; when she came back to her senses it was but to burst into sobs. Her father shared her grief, and muttering imprecations against the King of Egypt, had no doubts as to this misadventure being an evil portent. He went off in haste to consult the oracle in his chapel. The oracle answered—"Everything mixed up together; dead, alive, faithlessness and constancy, loss and gain, calamities and good fortune." Neither he nor his council could understand a word of it; but he was satisfied anyhow that he had fulfilled the duties his religion imposed on him.

While her father was consulting the oracle, his disconsolate daughter was giving the bird the funeral honours it had ordered; she determined to carry it to Arabia at the risk of her life. It was burned in incombustible linen with the orange-tree on which it had perched: she

gathered up the ashes in a small golden vessel surrounded with carbuncles and diamonds taken from the lion's jaws. What would she not have given, instead of accomplishing this sad duty, if she could have burned the detestable King of Egypt alive ! it was her one wish. In her vexation she killed his two crocodiles, his two zebras, his two hippopotamuses, his two ichneumons, and had his two mummies thrown into the Euphrates ; if she had had his bull Apis she would not have spared it.

The King of Egypt, incensed at this affront, left at once to urge forward the advance of his three hundred thousand men. The King of the Indies, seeing his ally depart, himself returned home the same day. The King of the Scythians slipped away with Princess Aldée during the night, firm in his resolve to come to fight for her at the head of three hundred thousand Scythians, and to give her back the heritage of Babylon which was her due, seeing that she was descended from the elder branch.

On her side lovely Formosante set forth at three o'clock in the morning with her caravan of pilgrims, trusting she would be able to go to Arabia to fulfil her bird's last wishes, and hoping that the justice of the immortal gods would give her back her dear Amazan without whom she could no longer live.

Thus, when the King of Babylon awaked, he found nobody there. "How the finish of great festivals," he said, "leaves an astonishing void in one's soul after all the bustle ! " But he was really right royally wroth when he learned of the abduction of Princess Aldée. He ordered all his ministers to be waked and the council to be convoked. While he was awaiting their arrival he did not fail to consult his oracle, but he could never draw from it any words but these which have since become so famous throughout the universe—"If one does not find girls husbands, they find them for themselves."

The order was given immediately for the advance of

three hundred thousand men against the King of the Scythians. Behold the most terrible war flaming out on all sides, produced by the pleasures of the most splendid feast that had ever been given on earth. Asia was going to be desolated by four armies each of three hundred thousand men. It is quite clear that the Trojan war, which amazed the world some centuries later, was but child's play in comparison ; but it must be remembered too that in the Trojan quarrel there was question only of an old and very licentious woman who had herself abducted twice, instead of as here two girls and a bird being concerned.

The King of the Indies went to await his army on the splendid great highway that at that time went direct from Babylon to Kashmir. The King of the Scythians hurried with beautiful Aldée by the fine road that leads to Mount Immaus. Through bad government all these roads have since disappeared. The King of Egypt had marched to the west towards that little Mediterranean Sea which the ignorant Hebrews have since called "The Great Sea."

As for lovely Formosante she took the road to Bassora planted with tall palm-trees which give eternal shade and fruit in every season. The temple which was the object of her pilgrimage was in Bassora itself. The saint to whom the temple was dedicated was very similar to the one that has been worshipped since at Lampsacus. Not only did he provide girls with husbands, but often acted as husband himself. He was the most fêted saint in all Asia.

Formosante did not worry herself at all about the saint of Bassora ; she invoked the aid of no one but her dear Gangaride shepherd, her dear Amazan. She counted on taking ship from Bassora and going to Arabia Felix to fulfil the dead bird's orders.

At the third night's resting-place she had barely entered the hostelry where her quartermasters had everything

prepared for her than she learned that the King of Egypt was coming there too. Informed by his spies of the princess's journey, he had at once changed his route, followed by a numerous escort. On his arrival he placed sentries at all the doors and went up to lovely Formosante's room. "Mademoiselle," he said, "you're the very person I'm looking for. You took small notice of me when I was in Babylon ; it is just that scornful, capricious girls should be punished : you will be so good as to sup with me this evening ; you shall have none other bed but mine, and I shall do with you as I please."

Formosante saw clearly she was not the stronger ; she knew that good sense consists in adapting oneself to circumstances ; she made up her mind to free herself from the King of Egypt's clutches by an innocent artifice. She looked at him out of the corner of her eye, what several centuries later was called "ogling," and this is what she said to him with a modesty, grace, sweetness, embarrassment, and a host of fascinations that would have made the wisest man mad and the most clear-sighted blind :

"I admit, sir, that I always dropped my eyes before you when you did my father the king the honour of visiting him. I was afraid of my heart, I feared I was too unsophisticated, too naïve : I trembled lest my father and your rivals should remark the preference I had for you and which you merit so exceedingly. Now I can give myself up to my real feelings. I swear by the bull Apis who is, after you, what I respect most in the world, that your suggestion enchants me. I have already supped with you in the presence of my father the king, now I will sup with you here without his being present : all I ask of you is that your High-Almoner shall drink with us ; he seemed at Babylon to be a very good table-fellow ; I have some excellent Schiraz wine, which I will let you both taste. As regards your second suggestion, it sounds very attractive, but it barely becomes a well-bred girl to

speak of it ; be satisfied that I look on you as the greatest of kings and the most lovable of men."

This little speech turned the King of Egypt's head ; he was quite ready for the almoner to make a third. "I have still one favour to ask of you," said the princess, "and that is that my apothecary may be allowed to come to speak to me ; girls always have certain little troubles that need certain little attentions, I speak of vapours, palpitations, colics, suffocations, which in particular circumstances need particular remedies : in a word, I have urgent need of my apothecary, and I hope you will not refuse me so slight a mark of love."

"Mademoiselle," answered the King of Egypt, "although an apothecary's views are entirely opposed to mine, and the objects of his art are completely contrary to those of mine, I am too well-bred to refuse such a request ; I go to command him to come to speak with you while we await supper ; I assume you must be a little tired after your journey and you will doubtless need a chambermaid as well ; you may have the one that suits you best ; I will await your orders and your convenience."

He retired ; the apothecary and the chambermaid, Irla by name, arrived. The princess had complete confidence in her ; she ordered her to bring six bottles of Schiraz wine for supper, and to see that the sentries who kept her officers under arrest had the same wine to drink. Then she charged the apothecary to put into each bottle certain drugs from his medicine chest that would make people sleep for twenty-four hours, and of which he always carried a stock. Her orders were obeyed to the letter. After half an hour the king returned with the High-Almoner : the supper was very gay ; the king and the priest emptied the six bottles, and avowed they had not such good wine in Egypt ; the chambermaid had been careful to see that the servants drank also. As for the princess, she was very careful not

to drink at all, and excused herself by saying her doctor had put her on diet. Soon everybody was fast asleep.

The King of Egypt's Almoner had the most lovely beard a man of his kind could have. Formosante cut it off very neatly, and having sewn it into a little ribbon fastened it under her chin. She wrapped herself up in the priest's robe and all the habiliments of his office, and dressed up her chambermaid as a sacristan of the goddess Isis ; then armed with her urn and her gems passed out of the hotel under the noses of the sentries who slept as soundly as their master. The chambermaid had taken care to have two horses ready at the door. The princess could not take with her any of the officers of her suite ; they would have been arrested by the main guard.

Formosante and Irla passed the lines of soldiers who, taking her for the High Priest, called her "Most Reverend Father in God" and asked her benediction. In twenty-four hours the two fugitives reached Bassora, before the king waked. They then took off their disguises which might have aroused suspicion. They chartered as quickly as possible a vessel that took them through the Straits of Ormus to the lovely shores of Eden in Arabia Felix. It was this Eden of which the gardens were so famous that they became later the habitation of the just ; the Champs-Élysées were modelled on them, as well as the Gardens of the Hesperides and those of the Fortunate Islands ; for in those warm climates men did not think there could be a greater blessing than the shade of green trees accompanied by the whispering of waters. To live in these heavens with the supreme Being or to walk in the gardens, in paradise, was the same thing for men who always talk without understanding what they are saying, and who have hardly been able to have clear ideas or exact expressions.

As soon as the princess found herself in this land, her first care was to give her dear bird the funeral honours it had demanded of her. Her lovely hands prepared a

pyre of clove and cinnamon. What was her surprise when on spreading the bird's ashes on the pyre she saw them ignite of their own accord ! Everything was soon consumed. In place of the ashes there appeared nothing but a great egg from which she saw her bird come out more brilliant than it had ever been. It was the most beautiful moment the princess had experienced in all her life ; there was only one person who could be dearer to her ; she wanted him, but she did not have any hope of having him.

" I see quite clearly," she said to the bird, " that you are the phoenix of which I have heard so much. I am ready to die of amazement and joy. I had no belief in resurrection ; but my good fortune has convinced me that it exists."

" Resurrection, madam," said the bird, " is the simplest thing in the world. It is no more surprising to be born twice than once. Everything is resurrection in this world ; caterpillars are resuscitated as butterflies ; a fruit-stone placed in the earth is resuscitated as a tree ; all the animals that are buried in the earth are resuscitated as herbs, as plants, and nourish other animals of which very soon they become an integral part : all the particles composing the body are changed into different beings. It is true that I am the only one to which potent Ormuzz has granted the favour of being resuscitated in its own form."

Formosante, who, from the day she saw Amazan and the phoenix for the first, had passed her days in amazement, said to the bird—" I see clearly that the great Being has been able to form from ashes a phoenix almost exactly like you ; but that you are precisely the same person, that you have the same soul, that, I confess, I do not grasp very clearly. What happened to your soul while I was carrying you in my pocket after you were dead ? "

" My God, madam ! is it not as easy for the great

Ormuzd to continue his action on a little spark like myself as to commence it ? Before, he accorded me emotion, memory and thought ; he still accords me them ; that he has attached this favour to a spark of elementary fire hidden in me or to my combined organs does not at bottom make the slightest difference : both the phœnix and mankind are always ignorant as to how the thing happens ; but the greatest favour the supreme Being has accorded me is to be born again for you. If only I can pass the twenty-eight thousand years I have still to live before my next resurrection with you and my dear Amazan ! ”

“ My phœnix,” returned the princess, “ think of it, the first words you said to me in Babylon, I shall never forget them, gave me the fond hope of seeing once more the dear shepherd I idolise ; we must absolutely go to the land of the Gangarides together and bring him back to Babylon.”

“ That’s just my idea,” said the phœnix. “ There’s not a moment to be lost. We must go to find Amazan by the shortest road, that is, by air. In Arabia Felix there are two griffons, intimate friends of mine, who live only a hundred and fifty miles from here ; I will write to them by pigeon post ; and they will come before night-fall. We shall have plenty of time to have a little couch made for you with drawers where you can put some food. With your maid you will be very comfortable in this vehicle. The two griffons are the strongest of their species ; each of them will take one end of the couch in its claws ; but, I repeat, time is precious.” He went with Formosante at once to order the couch from an upholsterer of his acquaintance. It was finished in four hours. In the drawers were placed some small rolls, some biscuits of finer quality than were obtainable in Babylon, some big lemons, some pineapples, cocoanuts, pistachios and Eden wine, which is as much finer than Schiraz wine as Schiraz is than Surenne.

The couch was light, comfortable and solid. The two griffons reached Eden at the appointed time. Formosante and Irla seated themselves in the carriage. The two griffons lifted it like a feather. Sometimes the phoenix flew close by, at others it perched on the back. The two griffons sailed towards the Ganges with the speed of an arrow cleaving the air. Only at night did the equipage stop for a few moments for the travellers to eat and for the two carriers to have a drink.

They reached the land of the Gangarides at last. The princess's heart beat with hope, love and joy. The phoenix stopped the carriage before Amazan's house, and asked to speak to him, but he had already departed three hours before no one knew whither.

There are no words even in the language of the Gangarides that can express the despair with which Formosante was stricken. "That's what I feared," said the phoenix. "The three hours you passed in your hostelry on the Bassora road with the wretched King of Egypt have taken away from you your life's happiness for ever, maybe: I fear greatly we have lost Amazan irretrievably."

He then asked the servants if he might greet Amazan's mother. They answered that her husband had died the evening before last, and that she was not receiving anybody. The phoenix had influence in the house and did not fail to have the Princess of Babylon shown into a salon of which the walls were covered with orange-wood inlaid with ivory. The under-shepherds and under-shepherdesses in long white robes girdled with ornaments of the colour of the rising sun, served her with a hundred delightful viands in a hundred simple porcelain baskets: among them there were no disguised corpses; there was rice, sago, semolina, vermicelli, macaroni, omelettes, egg caramel (4), cream-cheeses, pastries of all sorts, vegetables, fruits of a taste and perfume of which in other climates one has no idea: there were refreshing liqueurs, better than the best wines, in profusion.

While the princess, couched on a bed of roses, was eating, four peacocks, silent happily, fanned her with their lustrous wings ; two hundred birds, a hundred shepherds and a hundred shepherdesses gave her a concert with two choirs ; the nightingales, canaries, warblers and chaffinches sang the treble with the shepherdesses, and the shepherds sang the counter-tenor and bass : it was just a manifestation of nature glorious and simple. The princess avowed that even if there was more magnificence in Babylon, nature was a thousand times more agreeable in the land of the Gangarides. But during this comforting and voluptuous music she wept ; to young Irla, her companion, she said—“ These shepherds and shepherdesses, these nightingales and canaries make love, I am deprived of the Gangaride hero who is the noble object of my most tender and impatient desire.”

While she was making a light repast, admiring her surroundings and weeping, the phœnix was talking to Amazan’s mother. “ Madam,” it said, “ you cannot excuse yourself from seeing the Princess of Babylon ; you know. . .”

“ I know everything,” she answered, “ up to her adventure in the hostelry on the Bassora road ; a blackbird told me all about it this morning ; and this blackbird is the cause of my son having become mad with despair and of his having left his father’s house.”

“ You do not know then,” returned the phœnix, “ that the princess brought me back to life ? ”

“ No, my dear child, I knew from the blackbird that you were dead, and I was inconsolable. I was so overwhelmed by this loss, my husband’s death, and my son’s hurried departure that I closed my door to everyone ; but seeing that the Princess of Babylon does me the honour of coming to see me, ask her to come in at once ; I have things of the utmost importance to tell her, and I want you to be present.”

She went at once into another salon to meet the prin-

cess. She walked with difficulty ; she was a lady about three hundred years old ; but she still had the remains of beauty, and one could see that when she was about two hundred and thirty to forty she must have been charming. She received Formosante with respectful dignity mingled with an air of sorrowful interest that made a deep impression on the princess.

Formosante first offered sympathy to her on her husband's death.

"Alas!" said the widow, "his loss is of greater interest to you than you think."

"Without question I am touched by it," said Formosante, "he was the father of . . ." At these words she wept. "It is only for him I have come through all these dangers," she continued. "For him I have left my father and the most magnificent court in the world, for him I have been abducted by a King of Egypt I loathe. Then, after escaping this ravisher, I have voyaged through the air so that I might see the man I love. I arrive, and he flies from me!" Tears and sobs stopped her saying more.

"Madam," answered the mother, "when the King of Egypt was about to ravish you, when you supped with him in the inn on the Bassora road, when your beautiful hands were pouring him out the Schiraz wine, do you recall seeing a blackbird fluttering about the room?"

"Yes, now you mention it, it comes back to my mind. I did not pay any attention to it at the time, but now I come to think of it I remember very well that at the moment when the King of Egypt rose from the table to give me a kiss the blackbird flew out of the window with a great cry, and did not come back any more."

"Behold the cause of our misfortunes," continued Amazan's mother. "My son had sent that blackbird to bring him information as to the state of your health

and as to all that was happening in Babylon. He counted on returning soon to throw himself at your feet and dedicate his life to you. The blackbird found you in an inn drinking gaily with the King of Egypt and an ugly priest ; he saw you finally give an affectionate kiss to this monarch who had killed the phœnix, and for whom my son has an unconquerable horror. At this sight the blackbird was seized with just indignation, and flew away cursing your fatal love affairs. It returned to-day and told all it had seen. But at what a fatal time, good heavens ! My son was weeping with me for the death of his father and the phœnix, and he had just learned from me that he was your first cousin ! ”

“ My cousin, madam, my cousin ? Is it possible ? by what chance ? How ? Am I at once so fortunate, and at the same time so unfortunate as to have offended him ? ”

“ My son is your cousin, I tell you,” resumed the mother, “ and soon I will prove it to you, but in becoming my relative you tear my son from me ; he cannot survive the sorrow caused by the kiss you gave the King of Egypt.”

“ I swear to you, aunt,” cried lovely Formosante, “ by him and by potent Ormuzd, that this fatal kiss, far from being criminal, was the strongest proof of love I could show your son. For him I disobeyed my father. For him I was on my way from the Euphrates to the Ganges. I fell into the hands of this unworthy Egyptian Pharaoh, and I could not escape from him except by deceiving him. I call the phœnix’s ashes and soul, which were in my pocket, to bear witness ; the phœnix will do me justice. But how can your son, born on the banks of the Ganges, be my cousin, when my family has reigned on the banks of the Euphrates for so many centuries ? ”

“ You are aware,” answered the venerable Gangaride lady, “ that your great-uncle Aldée was King of Babylon, and was dethroned by Belus’ father.”

“ Yes, madam.”

“ You are aware that his son Aldée had by his marriage a daughter named Aldée who was brought up at your court. It was this prince who, persecuted by your father, came to find refuge in our happy country under another name. It was he who married me, and by whom I had the young prince Aldée-Amazan, the finest, strongest, bravest, most virtuous of mortals, and to-day the maddest. The reputation of your beauty took him to the festival in Babylon : from that time he idolised you, and maybe I shall never see my dear son again.”

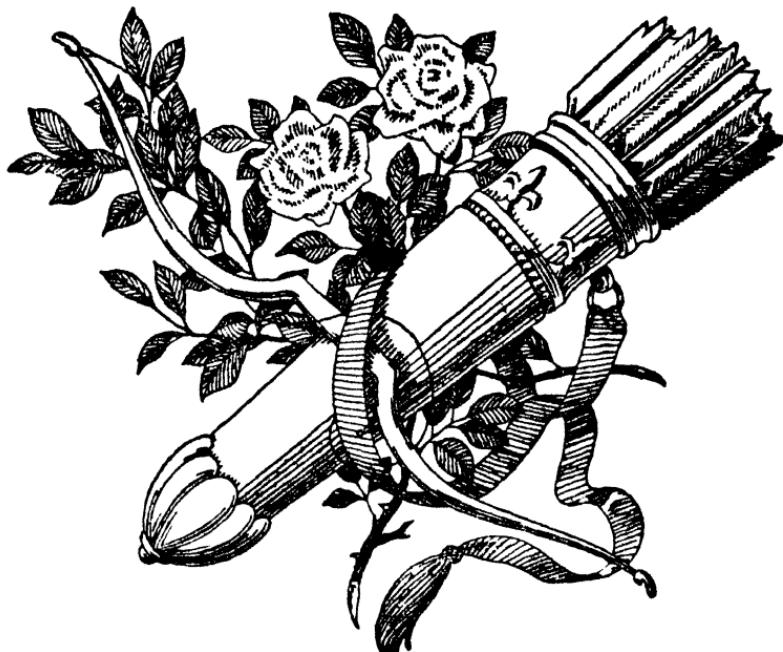
She then showed the princess all the titles of the house of Aldée, but Formosante hardly deigned to look at them. “ Does one make inquiries about what one desires ? ” she cried. “ My heart believes you sufficiently. But where is Aldée-Amazan ? where is my cousin, my lover, my king ? where is my life ? what road did he take ? I will go and look for him in all the worlds the Eternal Being has made, and of which he is the chief ornament. I will go to the stars Canopus, Scheat and Aldebaran ; I will go and convince him of my love and innocence.”

The phœnix vindicated the princess of the crime imputed to her by the blackbird of having given the King of Egypt a kiss for love : but Amazan had to be undeceived and brought back. Birds were despatched on every road ; unicorns were set to work : news came back at last that Amazan had taken the road to China.

“ To China then ! ” cried the princess. “ It is not a long journey ; I hope to bring your son back in fifteen days at most.” At these words what tears of tenderness filled the throats of Gangaride mother and Babylonian princess ! what embraces ! what overflowing of hearts !

The phœnix at once ordered a coach and six unicorns. The mother supplied two hundred horsemen, and pre-

sented the princess her niece with several thousand of the most beautiful diamonds of the country. The phoenix, sore-stricken with the evil caused by the blackbird's indiscretion, ordered all the blackbirds to vacate the country. It is from that time that no more blackbirds are found on the banks of the Ganges.





CHAPTER V

IN less than a week the unicorns brought Formosante, Irla and the phœnix to Cambalu, the capital of China. It was a larger town than Babylon, and its magnificence was of quite a different kind. These new sights and customs would have amused Formosante had she been occupied with anything but Amazan.

As soon as the Emperor of China learned that the Princess of Babylon was at the gates of the city, he sent four thousand mandarins in ceremonial robes to welcome her ; they all fell on their faces before her and each offered a compliment written in letters of gold on a strip of purple silk. Formosante told them that if she had four thousand tongues she would not fail to reply at once to each mandarin, but that as she had only one she begged them to be satisfied that she used it to thank them all collectively. With great respect they led her to the Emperor.

This Emperor was the most just, the most polite and the most wise monarch in the whole world. He it was who had first tilled a little field with his own imperial hands in order to inculcate in his people a respect for agriculture. He was the first to found prizes for virtue. Everywhere else, the laws were limited shamefully to the punishment of crimes. This Emperor had just driven out of his country a troop of foreign bonzes who had come from the depths of the west in the senseless hope of forc-

ing all China to think as they thought, and who under the pretext of making truth manifest had already amassed honours and riches. When he drove them out he said these very words to them, which are recorded in the annals of the empire :—

“ You might do as much evil here as you have done elsewhere : you came to teach dogmas of intolerance to the most tolerant nation in the world. I send you away so that I may never be forced to punish you. You will be conducted honourably to my frontiers ; you will be supplied with all you need to take you to the borders of the hemisphere whence you are come. Go in peace if you wish to be in peace, and never return.”

The Princess of Babylon learned of this speech and judgment with delight ; she felt all the more sure of being well received at the court inasmuch as she was very far from having any intolerant dogmas. The Emperor dined with her *tête-à-tête*, and was polite enough to forgo all embarrassing etiquette. She presented the phœnix to him ; it perched on the Emperor’s chair, and was much caressed by him. Towards the end of the meal, Formosante ingenuously confided to him the object of her journey, and begged him to have a search made in Cambalu for handsome Amazan, whose adventure she related without hiding anything of the fatal passion for this young hero with which her heart burned.

“ But I know him,” said the Emperor of China. “ He gave me the pleasure of coming to my court ; he enchanted me did this lovable Amazan ; it is true he is sore-stricken, but his charm is none the less charming ; not one of my favourites has more wit than he ; no mandarin legislator has greater knowledge ; no mandarin knight has more martial or heroic an air ; his extreme youth gives an added value to his talents. If I were unfortunate enough, abandoned by Tien and Changti to the extent of wanting to be a conqueror, I should ask Amazan to place himself at the head of my armies, and I should be

sure of triumphing over the whole world. It is a great pity his grief should sometimes turn his head."

"Oh, sir!" said Formosante, her cheeks flaming, and in her voice a note of sorrow, shock and reproach, "why have you not let me dine with him? You are killing me; send for him now."

"Madam, he left this morning, and he did not say towards which country he was journeying."

Formosante turned to the phœnix. "Phœnix, phœnix," she cried, "have you ever seen a girl unhappier than I am? But tell me," she continued to the Emperor, "why did he leave so hastily a court as courteous as yours, where it seems to me one would wish to pass one's life?"

"This is what happened. A princess of the blood royal, one of the most lovable of girls, conceived a passion for him, and gave him an appointment at her house at noon. He departed at daybreak leaving behind him this note, which has cost my relative many tears.

"Beautiful Princess of the royal blood of China, you deserve a heart that has never belonged to anyone but yourself; I have sworn by the immortal gods never to love any woman but Formosante, Princess of Babylon, and to teach her how one may quench the desires one has when travelling: she has had the misfortune to succumb to an unworthy King of Egypt: I am the most wretched of men; I have lost my father and my phœnix and the hope of being loved by Formosante; I have left a disconsolate mother and my fatherland as I could not live one moment in places where I learned Formosante had loved anyone else but me; I have sworn to traverse the globe and remain faithful. You would despise me, the gods would punish me, and I should be breaking my oath; take a lover, madam, and be as faithful as I am."

"Ah, let me have that amazing letter!" cried Formosante, "it will console me. I am happy in my misfortune. Amazan loves me. For me Amazan renounces possession of the princesses of China. There's no other

man on earth capable of such a victory. He gives me a grand example. The phœnix knows I have no need of it. It is cruel to be robbed of one's lover because of the most innocent kiss given out of pure faithfulness. But where has he gone ? Deign to tell me what road he took, and I will be off."

The Emperor of China answered that from the reports he had received he believed her lover had taken a road that led to Scythia. The unicorns were harnessed right away, and the princess after the most affectionate compliments took leave of the Emperor with her phœnix, her chambermaid Irla and the rest of her suite.

As soon as she was in Scythia she saw more than ever how men and governments differ, and will differ always until such time as some nation more enlightened than the rest shall gradually bring light after a thousand centuries of shadows, and until the day that in savage climes there shall be found heroic souls that will have the strength and perseverance to turn brutes into men. No towns in Scythia, consequently no pleasing arts. Nothing but vast prairies and whole nations in tents and chariots. This sight was frightening. Formosante asked in which tent or which chariot the king lodged. She was told that for the last week he had been on the march at the head of three hundred thousand horsemen to meet the King of Babylon whose niece the lovely Princess Aldée he had carried off.

"What !" cried Formosante, " he has carried off my cousin ! I never expected this fresh adventure. What ! my cousin, who was only too happy to pay court to me, has become a queen, and I am not yet even married !" She had herself taken at once to the queen's tents.

Their unexpected meeting in these distant climes, the strange things each had to tell the other, gave their interview a charm that made them forget they had never loved each other ; they saw each other again with delight ; a sweet illusion took the place of real affection ; they

kissed with tears in their eyes and there was even a hearty frankness between them, seeing that the interview did not take place in a palace.

Aldée recognised the phoenix and Irla the confidential maid. She gave some sable furs to her cousin, who gave her some diamonds. They spoke of the war the two kings were undertaking ; they deplored the state of men whom monarchs out of pure caprice send to cut each other's throats for differences that two honest people could settle in an hour : but they talked particularly of the handsome stranger, lion-conqueror, giver of the biggest diamonds in the world, writer of madrigals, owner of the phoenix, become the most unhappy of men, on the report of a blackbird.

“ He is my dear brother,” said Aldée.

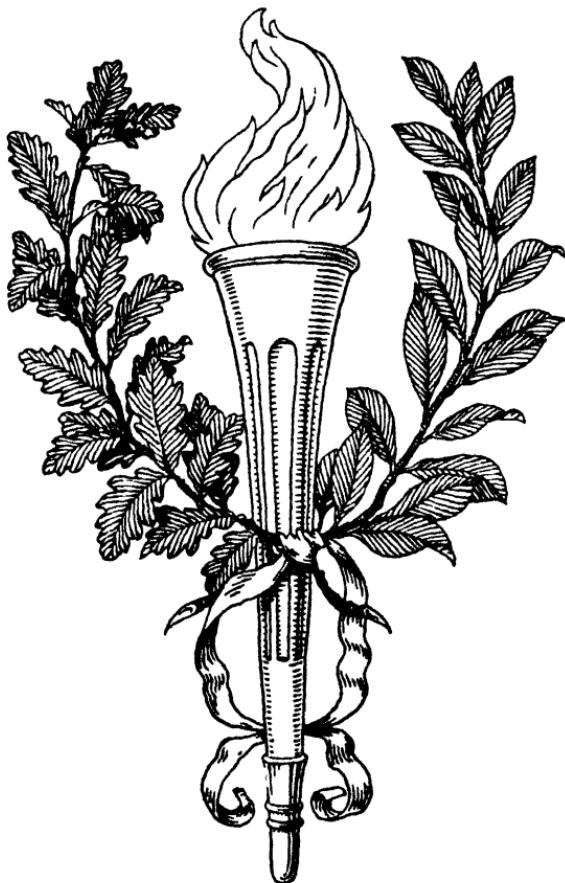
“ He is my lover,” cried Formosante. “ You have seen him doubtless. Maybe he is still here. He knows he is your brother, cousin. He won’t have left you as abruptly as he left the Emperor of China.”

“ Have I seen him, great God ! ” answered Aldée. “ Why, he passed four whole days with me. Oh, cousin ! my brother is to be pitied ! A false report has driven him completely mad. He is running all over the world without knowing where he is going. Think of it—he has pushed his mania to the point of refusing the favours of the most lovely Scythian girl in all Scythia. He left yesterday after writing her a letter that has made her despair. As for him he has gone to the land of the Cimmerians.”

“ God be praised ! ” cried Formosante. “ Yet another refusal in my favour ! my happiness surpasses my hope as my unhappiness has surpassed all my fears. Give me this charming letter that I may be away, that I may follow him, my hands filled with his sacrifices. Good-bye, cousin. Amazan is in the land of the Cimmerians ; I fly there.”

Aldée thought her cousin the princess still madder

than her brother Amazan : but as she herself had experienced the beginnings of this epidemic, as she had left the delights and splendours of Babylon for the King of the Scythians, as women are always interested in madnesses of which love is the cause ; she really felt quite tender towards Formosante, wished her a happy journey and promised to further the success of her cousin's passion if ever she should be fortunate enough to see her brother again.





CHAPTER VI

IHE Princess of Babylon and the phœnix soon reached the empire of the Cimmerians (5), much less populated than China, it is true, but twice as large ; similar to Scythia formerly, and become some time since as flourishing as the kingdoms that plume themselves on the instruction they give to other states.

After several days' march one came to a very big town (6) which the reigning empress (7) was having improved, but she was not there ; she was journeying from the frontiers of Europe to the frontiers of Asia at the time, in order to see her states with her own eyes, to judge of the evils she found and bring remedies, to improve conditions and sow the seeds of learning.

One of the chief officers of this ancient capital, learning of the arrival of the Babylonian girl and the phœnix, hastened to render homage to the princess and do her the honours of the country, in the certainty that his mistress, who was the most courteous and magnificent of queens, would thank him for having received so great a lady with the same attention she herself would have lavished on her.

Formosante was lodged in the palace from which a crowd of tiresome people who wanted to look at her were removed ; ingenious fêtes were organised in her honour.

The Cimmerian lord, who was a great naturalist, had long talks with the phoenix when the princess had retired to her apartment. The phoenix admitted he had travelled formerly to the land of the Cimmerians, but that he no longer recognised the country. "How have there been such prodigious changes in so short a time?" he asked. "It is not three hundred years ago that I saw savage nature here in all its horror; to-day I find arts, splendour, glory and courtesy."

"One man alone (8) started this great work," answered the Cimmerian, "and a woman has perfected it. A woman has been a better legislatress than Isis of the Egyptians and Ceres of the Greeks. Most legislators have had a narrow despotic genius that has cramped their view to seeing nothing but the land they have governed. Each has looked on his people as being the only race on earth or necessarily as an enemy of the rest of the earth. They have formed their institutions for a single people, introduced customs for that one people, established a religion for this one race alone. Thus it is that the Egyptians, so famous for their piles of precious stones, have become besotted and dishonoured by their barbarous superstitions. They consider other nations profane and will have no communication with them; and, with the exception of the court which sometimes does raise itself above vulgar prejudices, there is not an Egyptian who would eat of a dish from which a foreigner had been served. Their priests are cruel and ridiculous. It is better to have no laws and to listen to nothing but nature that has graved in our hearts the sense of justice and injustice, than to submit society to such unsocial laws.

"Our empress's ideas are entirely contrary. She considers her vast state, within which all the meridians meet, as all the peoples that live on these different meridians. Her first rule has been to tolerate all religions and to have compassion on all errors. Her powerful genius has perceived that, though creeds vary, morals are everywhere

the same. By this principle she has allied her people to all the other peoples of the world, and the Cimmerians are coming to regard the Scandinavians and the Chinese as their brothers. She has done more ; she wished to see this precious tolerance, the chief bond of mankind, established among her neighbours. Thus has she merited the title of Mother of Her Country, and if she perseveres she will have that of Benefactor of Humanity.

“ Before her, men who had unfortunately won power sent troops of murderers to ravage unknown tribes and water with their victims’ blood these victims’ patrimony ; these assassins were called heroes, and their brigandage glory. Our sovereign has another sort of glory. She has sent her armies to bring peace, to stop men from harming each other, to force them to bear with each other ; and her standards have been those of public concord.”

The phœnix was enchanted with all this lord told him. “ I have been in the world twenty-seven thousand nine hundred years and seven months,” he said, “ but I have never yet seen anything comparable to what you relate.” He asked news of his friend Amazan. The Cimmerian told him the same things that had been told the princess in China and Scythia. Amazan fled from all courts as soon as a lady gave him an appointment at which he feared he might succumb. The phœnix soon informed Formosante of this fresh proof of fidelity that Amazan gave her, a fidelity all the more astonishing in that he could never suspect his princess would ever learn of it.

He had departed for Scandinavia (9). It was in these climes that still more novel sights struck his eyes. Here royalty and liberty dwelled together in an accord that seemed impossible in other states : the agriculturists as well as the great lords of the kingdom had a voice in the government ; and a young prince (10) gave the greatest hope of being worthy to command a free nation. There it was something stranger ; the only king (11) who was

lawfully despotic over the land by a contract with his people was at the same time the youngest and most just of kings.

In Sarmatia (12) Amazan found a philosopher on the throne. He might have been called the king of anarchy, for he was chief of a hundred thousand little kings each of whom could by a single word annul the resolutions of all the others. Aeolus had not more trouble in housing all the winds which fight with each other incessantly than this monarch had to gain people's good will. He was a pilot in an eternal storm ; and yet the ship was not battered to pieces ; for the prince was an excellent pilot.

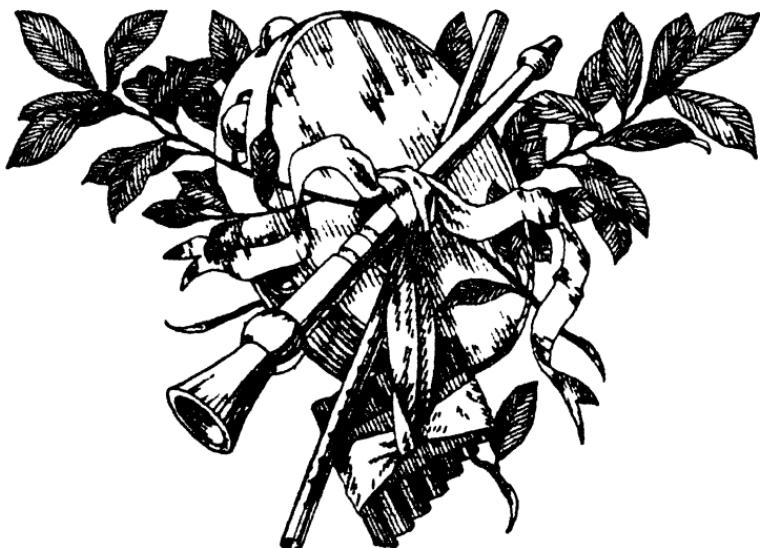
While he traversed all these countries so different from his fatherland, Amazan constantly refused all the good luck that happened in his path ; he was always in despair at the kiss Formosante had given the King of Egypt, and always firm in his inconceivable resolve to give Formosante an example of unique and unshakable fidelity.

The Princess of Babylon with the phoenix followed his tracks everywhere, and never missed him by more than a day or two, without either the one tiring of hastening or the other losing one moment in her pursuit.

In this way they went right across Germany. They admired the progress reason and philosophy were making in the north : all the princes there were learned men, all permitted a liberty of thought ; their education had not been confided to men whose interest it was to deceive them, or who were themselves deceived. They had been reared with a knowledge of universal ethics and a scorn of superstition : they had banished in all their states a senseless custom that enfeebled and depopulated many southern countries ; this was the custom of burying alive in vast dungeons an infinite number of each sex separated eternally the one from the other, and of making them swear never to have any communication with each other. This exceeding mania, that enjoyed a great influence for

many centuries, had devastated the land as much as the most cruel wars.

The Scandinavian princes had understood at last that if one wants to have a stud-farm one must not separate the strongest horses from the mares. They destroyed also errors no less extravagant and pernicious. To finish with, men dared be reasonable in these vast countries, whereas elsewhere it was thought they could not be governed unless they were kept in a state of imbecility.





CHAPTER VII



MAZAN reached the land of the Batavians. In his grief his heart felt a sweet satisfaction at finding there some faint resemblance to the Gangarides' happy country ; liberty, equality, cleanliness, abundance, tolerance ; but the ladies of the country were so cold that none of them made him advances as they had done everywhere else ; he was not bothered with resisting them. If he had wanted to attack these ladies he would have subjugated them all one after the other, without being loved by any of them : but he was far from dreaming of making conquests.

Formosante nearly caught him up in the land of these insipid people : she fell short of him only by a moment. Amazan had heard speak in Batavia of a certain island, named Albion, with so much praise that he had determined to take ship with his unicorns by a vessel which with a favourable east wind had carried him in four hours to the shores of this land that was more famous than Tyre and the isle of Atlantis. Lovely Formosante, who had followed him to the banks of the Dwina, the Vistula, the Elbe and the Weser, arrived at last at the mouth of the Rhine, which then emptied its rapid waters into the German Sea.

She learned that her dear lover had sailed towards the

coast of Albion ; she thought she could see his ship ; she uttered loud cries of joy that surprised all the Batavian ladies, who had no idea a young man could be the cause of so much delight. As regards the *phœnix*, they did not take much notice of it as they judged that its feathers would not probably fetch such a good price as those of the ducks and goslings in their fens. The Princess of Babylon hired, or chartered, two vessels to carry her and all her retinue to that blessed isle which was about to possess the unique object of all her desires, the soul of her life, the god of her heart.

A fatal west wind sprang up suddenly just at the moment that the faithful and unfortunate Amazan was setting foot on Albion's shore ; the Princess of Babylon's vessels could not leave their moorings. A tightening of the heart, a bitter grief, a profound melancholy took possession of Formosante : in her woe she took to her bed while waiting for the wind to change ; but it blew a whole week with despairing violence. During this week-long century the princess had Irla read stories to her ; it is not that the Batavians knew how to write them, but as they were the agents of the universe they sold the world's wit as well as the world's groceries. The princess bought from Marc-Michel Rey all the stories that had been written among the Ausonians and the ancient Gauls and of which the sale was wisely forbidden among these peoples in order to enrich the Batavians. She hoped she would find in these stories some adventures resembling her own which might charm away her sorrows. Irla read, the *phœnix* gave its opinion, and the princess found neither in "*La Paysanne Parvenue*" (13), nor in "*Le Sofa*" (14), nor in "*Les Quatre Facardins*" (15) anything in the least like her adventures. At every other moment she interrupted the story to ask which way the wind blew.



CHAPTER VIII

MEANWHILE, Amazan was already on the road to the capital of Albion in his coach and six unicorns. He was dreaming of the princess. He noticed a carriage overturned in a ditch ; the servants had gone to look for help ; the owner of the carriage remained quietly within, without showing the least impatience, and passed the time smoking ; for people smoked at that time. His name was My Lord Whatthen, which in the language into which I am translating this history signifies more or less " My Lord What-Does-It-Matter."

Amazan hastened to render him service ; without any help he lifted the carriage up, so much greater was his strength than that of ordinary men. My Lord Whatthen contented himself with saying—" This is a very vigorous fellow."

Some clodhoppers of the neighbourhood ran up, were very wroth to have come on a waste journey, and blamed the foreigner ; they called him " a dirty foreigner," threatened him and wanted to beat him.

Amazan seized two of them in each hand and hurled them twenty paces away ; the others were more respectful, saluted him and asked for money to have a drink ; he gave them more than they had ever seen before. My

Lord What-then spoke to him. " You are a worthy fellow," he said. " Come and dine with me at my country house ; it is only three miles away." He climbed into Amazan's coach because his own was out of adjustment owing to the shaking it had received.

After a quarter of an hour's silence he looked at Amazan a moment and said—" How d'ye do ? " which means literally—how make you yourself ? —and in the translator's language how do you carry yourself ? which does not mean anything at all in any language. Then he added—" You have six fine unicorns there," and returned to his smoke.

The traveller told him that the unicorns were at his service, that he came with them from the land of the Gangarides, and he took the opportunity of speaking of the Princess of Babylon and of the fatal kiss she had given the King of Egypt, to which the other made no answer at all, caring very little whether or no there was a King of Egypt or a Princess of Babylon. Another quarter of an hour passed in silence after which My Lord again asked his companion how he made himself, and if one ate good " roast-beef " in the land of the Gangarides. The traveller answered with his habitual courtesy that on the banks of the Ganges people did not eat their brothers. He explained the system that was many centuries later the system of Pythagoras, Porphyrius and Iamblichus. Whereupon My Lord went to sleep and did not wake until they reached his house.

He had a young and charming wife to whom nature had given a soul as live and sensitive as her husband's was indifferent. Several lords of Albion had come that day to dine with her. There were all sorts of types, for as the country had nearly always been governed by the families that came with the princes each brought different customs with them. Among the company were some very amiable people, others of superior intelligence, a few of profound knowledge.

The mistress of the house had none of that awkward embarrassment, none of that stiffness and bashfulness that was a reproach against young women of the time in Albion ; she did not hide by a disdainful demeanour and an affected silence the barrenness of her ideas and the humiliating confusion she felt at having nothing to say : never was a woman more attractive. She received Amazan with her natural courtesy and charm. The young foreigner's exceeding beauty, and the sudden comparison she drew between him and her husband, made a sensible impression on her.

Dinner was served. She sat Amazan beside her and made him eat all sorts of puddings, as she had learned from him that the Gangarides never ate anything that had received from the gods the divine gift of life. His beauty, his strength, the customs of the Gangarides, the progress of the arts, religion and government were matter for a conversation as agreeable as instructive during a meal that lasted until nightfall, and during the whole of which My Lord What-then drank much and said nothing.

After dinner, while My Lady poured out tea and devoured the young man with her eyes, he chatted with a member of Parliament, for everyone knows that at that time there was a parliament which was called the Witenagemot, which signifies "the assembly of wise men." Amazan inquired about the constitution, customs, laws, strength, manners and arts that made this country so commendable.

" For a long time," said the lord, " we walked naked, although our climate is not warm. We were long treated as slaves by the people who came from the ancient land of Saturn watered by the Tiber, but we did ourselves much greater harm than we suffered at the hands of our first conquerors. One of our kings pushed baseness so far as to declare himself subject of a priest who also dwelt on the banks of the Tiber, and who was known as ' The Old Man of the Seven Mountains ' : so long has

it been the fate of these seven mountains to dominate a great part of Europe formerly inhabited by brutes.

“ After this period of degradation came centuries of ferocity and anarchy. Our land, more stormy than the seas that surround it, was thrown into bloody confusion by our dissensions ; many crowned heads died on the scaffold ; more than a hundred princes of the blood royal ended their days beneath the headsman’s hands ; the hearts were torn out of their followers, whose faces were beaten with them. It was a butcher’s business to write the history of our island since he it was who had put ‘ finis ’ to all important matters.

“ It is not long ago, as a crowning horror, that some persons who wore a black cloak, and others who put a white shirt over their coats, were bitten by some mad dogs, and infected the whole nation with hydrophobia. In the name of Heaven and to pacify the Almighty, every citizen was either murderer or murdered, butcher or butchered, slave-driver or slave.

“ Who would believe that out of this appalling abyss, this chaos of dissension, atrocity, ignorance and fanaticism, there came at last the most perfect government maybe there is in the world to-day ? A king who is honoured and rich, who is all-powerful for the doing of good and impotent to do evil, is at the head of a free, martial, commercial and enlightened people. The lords on one side, the representatives of the towns on the other, share with the monarch the government of the country.

“ By a strange fatality one has seen disorder, civil war, anarchy and poverty ravage the land when kings have assumed arbitrary power. Peace, wealth and public happiness have reigned among us only when kings have recognised they were not absolute. When people quarrelled about unintelligible things everything was upset, and everything was in perfect order when they disregarded them. Our victorious fleets carry our glory over all the seas ; and our laws make our fortunes safe. Never

can a judge expound the law arbitrarily ; never is an unjustified judgment pronounced. We should punish as assassins judges who dared send a citizen to death without making known the evidence that accused him and the law that condemned him.

“ It is true that with us there are always two parties which fight each other with pen and intrigue, but they always clasp hands when there is a question of taking up arms to defend the fatherland and liberty. These two parties keep a watch on each other ; they act as a mutual obstruction to the violation of the sacred trust of government ; they hate each other, but they love the state ; they are jealous lovers who vie with each other in the service they can render to the same mistress.

“ With the same fundamental intelligence that has made us learn and maintain the rights of human nature, we have carried the sciences to the highest point that can be reached by man. Your Egyptians who pass for such great mechanics, your Indians who are believed to be such great philosophers, your Babylonians who flatter themselves they have observed the stars for four hundred and forty thousand years, the Greeks who have written so many phrases and so few facts, know precisely nothing compared with our youngest schoolboys who have studied the discoveries of our great masters. In the space of a hundred years we have torn more secrets from nature than the whole of mankind has discovered in the multitude of centuries.

“ That, really, is our present state. I have hidden from you neither the good nor the bad, our shames nor our glories ; and I have exaggerated nothing.”

At this speech Amazan felt himself thrilled with a desire to be instructed in these sublime sciences of which the lord spoke, and if his passion for the Princess of Babylon, his filial respect for the mother he had left, and love of his country had not made forceful appeal to his bruised heart, he would have wanted to pass the rest of his life in

the island of Albion. But the wretched kiss given by his princess to the King of Egypt did not leave him enough liberty of mind to study the advanced sciences.

“I admit,” he said, “that having imposed on myself a command to travel all over the world and escape from myself I am very curious to see this ancient land of Saturn, this race by the Tiber and the seven mountains to which once upon a time you were subservient. It must without question be the country of the first nation in the world.”

“I advise you to make this journey,” said the man of Albion, “however little you like music and painting. We ourselves often carry our boredom in the direction of the seven mountains. But you will be very surprised when you see our conquerors’ descendants.”

This conversation lasted a long time. Although handsome Amazan’s head was somewhat troubled, he spoke with so much charm, his voice was so impressive, his demeanour was so dignified and gentle, that the mistress of the house could not resist engaging him in private conversation in her turn. She tenderly clasped his hand as she spoke to him, and looked at him with bright, wet eyes that carried desire right into the springs of life. She made him stay to supper, and insisted he should stay the night. Each instant, each word, each look kindled her passion. As soon as everyone had retired she wrote him a little note, not doubting for a moment that he would not come to pay court to her in her bed, while My Lord What-then was snoring in his. Amazan again had the courage to resist ; such miraculous effect can a grain of madness have on a strong soul grievously wounded !

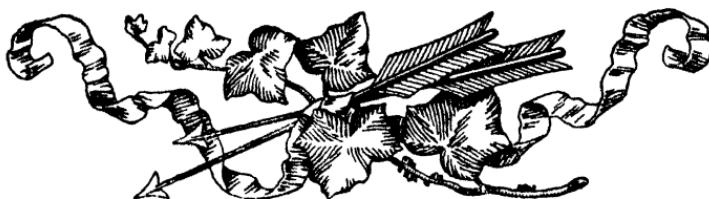
According to his custom, Amazan sent the lady a respectful reply in which he spoke of the sacredness of his oath and the strict obligation he was under to teach the Princess of Babylon how to tame her passions. After which he had his unicorns harnessed and left for Batavia again, leaving all the company in astonishment at him,

and the mistress of the house in despair. In her exceeding grief she did not put Amazan's letter away ; My Lord What-then read it the following morning. "What insipid triflings," he observed, shrugging his shoulders ; and went off fox-hunting with some topers of the neighbourhood.

Amazan was already on the sea armed with a map given him by the learned Albionian who had conversed with him at My Lord What-then's house. With great surprise he saw a great part of the earth on a sheet of paper.

His eyes and fancy wandered over the small space. He looked at the Rhine, the Danube, the Tyrolean Alps and all the countries he must pass through before reaching the town of the seven mountains. His eyes rested particularly on the land of the Gangarides, on Babylon where he had seen his dear princess, and on the fatal port of Bassora near where she had given the King of Egypt a kiss. He sighed and wept. But he agreed that the Albionian who had given him the world in miniature made no mistake when he said that the people on the banks of the Thames were a thousand times better educated than on the banks of the Nile, Euphrates and Ganges.

While he was returning to Batavia, Formosante was flying towards Albion with her two ships that scudded along under full sail. Amazan's ship and the princess's crossed each other's course, touched almost : the two lovers were close to each other, and had no means of suspecting it. Ah ! if they had known ! But fate the despot did not permit.





CHAPTER IX

AS soon as Amazan had landed on the flat and muddy shore of Batavia he set off like lightning for the city of the seven mountains. He had to cross the southern part of Germany. Every four miles he came across a prince and a princess, maids of honour and beggars. He was astonished at the coquettishness these ladies and maids of honour threw at him with German frankness, and he gave no reply but that of modest refusals. After crossing the Alps, he set sail on the sea of Dalmatia and landed in a town that resembled nothing he had yet seen. The sea formed the streets, the houses were built in the water. The few public squares that adorned this town were covered with men and women who had two faces, one the gift of nature, the other of painted cardboard that they placed on top of the first ; with result that the nation seemed composed of phantoms. The foreigners who came to this country started by buying a face, as elsewhere one buys hats and shoes. Amazan was scornful of this unnatural fashion, and showed himself as he was. In the town there were twelve thousand girls registered in the great book of the republic ; girls useful to the state, charged with the most profitable and agreeable trade that has ever enriched a nation. The ordinary merchants sent stuffs at great risk and expense to the east ; these lovely merchantesses did

without any risk at all an ever live trade in their charms. They all came to show themselves to handsome Amazan, and gave him a selection from which to choose. He fled as fast as he could with the name of the incomparable Princess of Babylon on his lips, and swearing by the immortal gods that she was more lovely than all the twelve thousand Venetian girls. "Darling rogue," he cried in his delirium, "I will teach you to be faithful."

He came at last to the yellow waters of the Tiber, the plague-sodden swamps, the pale, emaciated, sparse population, covered with old cloaks in holes that showed their shrivelled brown skin through; signs which told him he was at the gate of the city of the seven mountains, this city of heroes and legislators who had subdued and policed a large part of the world.

He had fancied he would see at the triumphal gate five hundred battalions commanded by heroes, and in the senate an assembly of demi-gods giving laws to the earth. He found for army about thirty scamps mounting guard with a sunshade, for fear of the sun. When he had penetrated to a temple that seemed to him very beautiful but less so than the one at Babylon, he was somewhat surprised to hear music sung by men with women's voices. "This aged land of Saturn is a nice place," he said. "I have seen one town where nobody had his own face, and now here's another where men have neither their own voices or beards."

He was told that these songsters were no longer men, that their virility had been filched from them in order that they might sing the more pleasantly the praises of a prodigious number of worthy persons. Amazan did not understand a word of this explanation. These gentlemen asked him to sing, and he sang a Gangaride air with his habitual charm. His voice was a very fine counter-tenor. "Ah! monsignor," they said to him, "what a charming soprano voice you would have, if . . . if . . ."

"What do you mean if . . . if what?"

“ Ah, monsignor . . . ! ”

“ Well . . . ! ”

“ If . . . if . . . if . . . you had no beard ! ” They then explained to him very amusingly and with many comic gestures, as is their custom, the matter in question. Amazan was quite stupefied. “ I have travelled far,” he said, “ I have never heard speak of such an odd fancy.”

When these people had sung a great deal, the old man of the seven mountains went in great procession to the gate of the temple, cut the air in four with his raised thumb, two fingers open and two closed, while he said these words in a language that is no longer spoken—“ To the town and the universe ” (16). The Gangaride could not understand how two fingers could reach so far.

He soon saw file before him the whole court of the master of the world. It was composed of grave personages some clad in red robes, others in violet. Nearly all looked at handsome Amazan with melting eyes. They made him profound bows and said to each other—*San Martino, che bel ragazzo ! San Pancratio, che bel fanciullo !*

The Zealots, whose trade was to show strangers the curiosities of the town, hastened to let him see some tumble-down houses where a muleteer would not have wanted to pass the night, but which had been once upon a time worthy monuments of a sovereign people. He saw also some pictures two hundred years old and some statues more than twenty centuries old that he thought masterpieces. “ Do you still do work like this ? ”

“ No, excellency,” answered one of the Zealots, “ but we despise the rest of the world because we own these rarities. We are a sort of old clo’ merchant who gets glory from the aged coats that hang in his shop.”

Amazan wanted to see the prince’s palace, and was taken there. He saw men in violet who were counting out the revenues of the state. So much from a country on the Danube, so much from another on the Loire or on the Vistula.

“ Oh ! ” said Amazan, after consulting his map, “ your master possesses then the whole of Europe like the ancient heroes of the seven mountains ? ”

“ He has to possess the whole world by divine right,” answered one of the violets, “ and there was even a time when his predecessors were nearly universal monarchs ; but their successors are so kind as to content themselves to-day with the little money that the kings their subjects pay them as tribute.”

“ So your master is in effect the king of kings. Is that his title ? ” said Amazan.

“ No, excellency, his title is ‘ Servant of the servants ’ ; he was originally fishmonger and porter, and that is why the emblems of his dignity are keys and fillets ; but he always gives orders to all the kings. Not so long ago he sent a hundred and one commandments to a king of the land of the Celts, and the king obeyed.”

“ Did your fishmonger send five or six hundred thousand men to enforce the execution of his hundred and one wishes, then ? ” asked Amazan.

“ Oh, no, excellency. Our holy master is not rich enough to pay for the upkeep of ten thousand soldiers ; but he has four or five hundred thousand divine prophets distributed in the other countries. These prophets of all colours are of course nourished at the people’s expense ; they announce on behalf of Heaven that my master can with his keys open and close all locks, and especially the locks of safes. A Norman priest, who was the confidant of the thoughts of the king I have mentioned, convinced him that he must obey my master’s hundred and one thoughts unquestioningly ; for you must know that one of the prerogatives of the old man of the seven mountains is to be always in the right, whether he deigns to speak or whether he deigns to write.”

“ A very strange man, forsooth ! ” said Amazan. “ I am very curious to dine with him.”

“ Excellency, even if you were king you could not eat

at his table. All he would do for you would be to have you served at a smaller and lower table beside him. But if you wish to have the honour of speaking to him, I will ask audience for you, in consideration of the *buona manchia* you will be so kind as to give me."

"Very willingly," said the Gangaride.

The violet bowed. "I will introduce you to-morrow," he said. "You will make three genuflexions, and you will kiss the feet of the old man of the seven mountains."

At these words Amazan burst out laughing so loudly that he nearly suffocated: he went out holding his sides, and laughed till he cried all the way back to his hostelry, where he still laughed long and loud.

At his dinner twenty beardless men and twenty fiddlers were present; they gave him a concert. He was courted the rest of the day by the most important lords of the city; they made him suggestions even stranger than that of kissing the feet of the old man of the seven mountains. As he was exceedingly polite he thought at first that these gentlemen took him for a lady, and he warned them of their mistake with most discreet decorum. But as he was pressed somewhat sharply by two or three of the more determined violets, he threw them out of the window without thinking he was making a great sacrifice for lovely Formosante. He left this city of masters of the world as quickly as possible, where he had to kiss an old man's toe, as if his cheek were on his feet, and where young men were approached with no other object than to invite them to participate in still stranger ceremonies.





CHAPTER X

EROM province to province, always repulsing amorous provocations of every kind, always faithful to the Princess of Babylon, always furious with the King of Egypt, this model of constancy reached the new capital of the Gauls. This town had passed like so many others through the degrees of barbarism, ignorance, foolishness and misery. Its first (17) name had been "mud" and "mire"; then it had taken that of Isis, from the religion of Isis that had reached it. Its first senate was a company of watermen. It was long a slave of the predatory heroes of the seven mountains, and a few centuries later of other brigand heroes who came from the further bank of the Rhine and took possession of its small territory.

Time, which changes everything, had made of it a city of which one half was very splendid and agreeable, and the other somewhat coarse and ridiculous: that was the emblem of its inhabitants. There were within its walls about a hundred thousand persons at least who had nothing to do but enjoy themselves and be entertained. This nation of idlers criticised the arts the others cultivated. They knew nothing of what passed at court, although it was only four little miles away from them; it seemed it must be six hundred miles at least. The delights of society, gaiety and frivolity were the sole

things that were important to them. They were governed like children to whom one gives toys to stop their crying. If one spoke to them of the horrors that had two centuries previously ravaged their country, and of the appalling times when one half of the nation had massacred the other half for pure sophistries, they said that that was certainly not good, and then set to laughing and singing comic songs.

The more polite, pleasant and amiable the idlers were, the more one observed a sad contrast between them and the societies of extraordinarily busy men.

There was among these extraordinarily busy men, or men who claimed to be extraordinarily busy, a troop of sombre fanatics, half ridiculous, half knaves, the sight of whom alone vexed the earth, and who would have overthrown the whole world, if they had been able, in order to give themselves a little power. But the nation of idlers, dancing and singing, drove them back into their caves, as birds force screech-owls to dive back into their holes in tumble-down houses.

Other extraordinarily busy men, fewer in number, were the conservators of ancient barbarous customs against which frightened nature loudly protested ; they did nothing but consult their worm-eaten books. If they found there a senseless and horrible habit, they regarded it as a sacred law. It is through this cowardly habit of never daring to think for themselves, and of taking their ideas from the rubbish-heap of a time when people did not think, that there were in the city of pleasure so many atrocious usages. It is for this reason that there was never any proportion between crimes and punishments. An innocent man was sometimes made to suffer a thousand deaths in order that he might be forced to confess to a crime he had not committed.

A young man's blunder was punished as one would have punished a poisoning or the murder of a father by his son. The idlers uttered piercing cries when they

heard of it, but on the morrow thought no more about it, and talked of nothing but the latest fashions.

This race had seen a whole century pass, during which the fine arts were elevated to a degree of perfection no one had ever dared anticipate. Foreigners came then, as to Babylon, to admire the great architectural monuments, the marvellous gardens, the sublime efforts of sculpture and painting. They were enchanted with a music that thrilled the soul without stunning the ear.

Only during this happy century was this nation acquainted with true poetry, poetry, that is to say, that is natural and harmonious, which speaks to the heart as to the mind. Sublime beauties were unveiled by new forms of eloquence. The theatres in particular re-echoed with works of art that no race had ever approached. Good taste, in short, showed itself in all professions, to the point that there were good writers even among the Druids.

So many laurels that had raised their heads to the clouds soon withered in an exhausted soil. Only a very small number remained, and their leaves were a pale, dead green. The decadence was produced by work being too facile, and people being too lazy to do good work, by a satiety of beauty, and by a taste for the strange and eccentric. Vanity protected artists who brought back barbarian times ; and this same vanity persecuted real talent and forced it to leave its country. The wasps drove out the bees.

There was barely any real art left, and barely any genius. Merit consisted in making random criticisms of the merit of the past century. The daubers of tavern walls knowingly criticised the pictures of great painters : the daubers of paper disfigured the works of great writers. Ignorance and bad taste had other daubers in their pay. The same things were repeated in a hundred volumes with different titles. Everything was either dictionary or pamphlet. A Druid journalist wrote twice a week the

obscure records of fanatics unknown to the nation, and of celestial marvels performed in garrets by little beggar-boys and beggar-girls. Other ex-Druuids, clad in black, nearly dead of hunger and wrath, complained in a hundred screeds that they were no longer allowed to deceive mankind, and that goats clad in grey were allowed to do so. Some arch-Druuids published defamatory libels.

Amazan knew nothing of all this, and if he had known he would hardly have been embarrassed by his knowledge, as his head had no room for anything but the Princess of Babylon, the King of Egypt, and his inviolable oath to scorn the ladies' amorous advances in whatever country his grief might lead him.

The whole frivolous populace, ignorant and always pushing mankind's natural curiosity to excess, long flocked round his unicorns ; the more intelligent among the women broke the doors of his hotel open in order to gaze in rapt contemplation at his person.

He showed his host first of all a desire to visit the court, but the well-bred idlers who happened to be present told him it was unfashionable, that the times were quite changed and that there was no amusement save in the town. He was invited that same evening to sup at the house of a lady whose wit and talents were known outside her own country, and who had travelled in some of the lands through which Amazan had passed. He approved highly of this lady and the company round her. The liberty there was decorous, the gaiety was not noisy, knowledge had nothing repulsive about it, and with nothing of studied affectation. He saw that "well-bred" is not an empty expression, although it is often usurped. The following day he dined with people no less amiable but much more voluptuous. The more satisfied he was with the guests, the more satisfied they were with him. He felt his heart soften and melt as the aromatic spices of his country gently dissolve before a low fire and exhale delicious perfumes.

After the meal he was taken to an enchanting spectacle that had been condemned by the Druids because it drew from them the audience of which they were the most jealous. This spectacle was composed of agreeable verses, delightful songs, dances that expressed the soul's emotions, and scenes that charmed the eyes in deceiving them. This form of pleasure, which brought together so many other forms, was known only by a foreign name ; it was called "opera," which signified formerly in the language of the seven mountains—work, pains, employment, labour, undertaking, job, business. This business delighted him. One girl in particular charmed him with her voice and the gracefulness that went with it. After the performance this business-girl was introduced to him by his new friends. He made her a present of a handful of diamonds. She was so grateful she could not leave him for the rest of the day. He supped with her, during the meal forgot his sobriety, and after the meal forgot his vow to be always insensible to beauty and inexorable to amorous advances. What an example of human frailty !

The lovely Princess of Babylon was arriving at that time with the phoenix, Irla her chambermaid and her two hundred Gangarides mounted on their unicorns. They had to wait quite a long time for the gates to be opened. She asked first of all if the most handsome, most courageous, most intelligent and most faithful of men was still in the city. The officials saw clearly that she meant Amazan. She had herself taken to his hotel ; her heart throbbed with joy as she entered ; her whole soul was thrilled with the inexpressible delight of seeing once more her lover, model of fidelity. Nothing could stop her going to his room : the curtains were not drawn before the window ; she saw handsome Amazan asleep in the arms of a pretty dark girl : both of them had a very great need of rest.

Formosante uttered a cry of anguish that re-echoed throughout the house, but which failed to wake either

her cousin or the business-girl. She fell swooning into Irla's arms. As soon as she had recovered consciousness she left the fatal room with mingled rage and grief. Irla inquired who the young lady was who passed such sweet hours with handsome Amazan. She learned she was a very complaisant business-girl who added to her talents that of singing quite charmingly.

"O just heaven! O potent Ormuzd!" cried the lovely Princess of Babylon in tears. "By whom am I betrayed, and for whom? So the man who refused so many princesses for me abandons me for a Gaulish buffoon! No, I shall never survive the affront."

"Madam," said Irla, "all young men are like that from one end of the world to the other. Even if they were in love with a beauty come down from heaven they would still at certain moments commit infidelities with a serving-maid."

"I am finished with him," answered the princess. "I shall never see him again all my life. Come, let us leave at once, have my unicorns harnessed."

The phœnix implored her to wait until Amazan was awake at least and it could speak to him.

"He doesn't deserve it," said the princess. "You would offend me cruelly; he would think I had asked you to reproach him for me, and that I wanted to make it up with him. If you love me don't add this insult to the insult he has already made me suffer."

The phœnix, who after all owed his life to the princess, could not disobey her. She departed with all her retinue.

"Where are we going, madam?" asked Irla.

"I haven't the faintest idea," answered the princess. "We will take the first road we come to. Provided I escape Amazan for ever I am content."

The phœnix was wiser than the princess because it had no passions, and comforted her on the road. It pointed out to her gently that it was sad to punish oneself for the faults of another, that Amazan had given her

sufficiently glorious and numerous examples of his fidelity for her to pardon him this momentary lapse ; that he was an upright man who had lacked Ormuzd's grace, and that he would be only too constant henceforth in love and virtue ; that the desire to expiate his fault would raise him above himself ; that she would only be the happier thereby ; that many great princesses before her had pardoned similar slips and derived benefit therefrom. It gave her examples, and as it possessed great arts of persuasion, Formosante's heart at last grew calmer and more peaceful. She wished she had not left so soon ; she found the unicorns were travelling too quickly : but she dared not retrace her steps ; torn between the desire to pardon and a longing to show her wrath, between love and vanity, she let her unicorns go on. In accordance with the prediction of her father's oracle she travelled all over the world.

When Amazan woke he learned of the arrival and departure of Formosante and the phœnix, of the princess's despair and anger. He was told she had sworn never to forgive him. "Nothing is left to me," he cried, "but to follow her and kill myself at her feet !"

His well-bred idler friends flocked in when they heard of this adventure. They all pointed out that it was infinitely better for him to stay with them, that nothing compared with the pleasant life they led in the midst of the arts and peaceful, delicious, luxurious pleasure ; that many foreigners and even kings had preferred this repose, with its agreeable and enchanting occupations, to their throne and country ; that, further, his carriage was broken, and that a saddler would make one in the latest fashion ; that the best tailor in town had already cut him a dozen coats in the latest style ; that the wittiest and most lovable ladies of the town, in whose houses comedy was played to perfection, had each reserved a day to fête him. During this time the business-girl sipped her chocolate in her dressing-closet, laughed, sang, and ogled hand-

some Amazan, who saw at last that she had not the sense of a gosling.

As this great prince's character was made up of sincerity, cordiality, frankness, magnanimity and courage, he had related his travels and misfortunes to his friends. They knew he was the princess's first cousin. They had heard about the fatal kiss she had given the King of Egypt. "If these little pranks," they said, "were not forgiven between relations, life would be just one long squabble."

Nothing shook his determination to fly after Formosante ; but his carriage was not ready, and he was forced to pass three days among the idlers in feasting and pleasure. At last he embraced them and took his leave, making them accept the best mounted diamonds in his country, and advising them to be always gay and frivolous, as it made them only the more likeable and happy. "The Germans," he said, are the old men of Europe ; the people of Albion are the grown men ; the inhabitants of Gaul are the children, and I like playing with them."





CHAPTER XI

Hguides had no difficulty in following the princess's route. People spoke of nothing but her and her big bird. Everywhere they were still in a state of enthusiastic admiration. The peoples of Dalmatia and the Ancona Marches experienced later less delicious surprise when they saw a house flying through the air ; the banks of the Loire, the Dordogne, the Garonne and the Gironde still re-echoed with the cheering.

When Amazan was at the foot of the Pyrenees the magistrates and Druids of the country made him dance a tambourine dance in spite of himself, but as soon as he had crossed the Pyrenees he saw no more gaiety or joy. Such songs as he heard at great intervals were all of a mournful character. The people walked gravely wearing threaded berries and daggers in their belts. The nation clad in black seemed to be in mourning. If Amazan's servants asked questions of the passers-by, they received signs for answer ; if one entered a hostelry the master of the house said in three words that he had nothing in the house and that one could seek for miles round the things of which one had urgent need. When one asked these mutes if they had seen the lovely Princess of Babylon pass, they answered less briefly—"We have seen her, she is not so lovely, there's no beauty in any but swarthy skins ;

she has an alabaster throat ; that is the most disgusting thing in the world and almost unknown in our land."

Amazan went forward towards the province that is watered by the Boetis. Not more than twelve thousand years had passed since this country had been discovered by the Tyrians, about the same time they had discovered the great isle of Atlantis which was submerged some centuries later. The Tyrians cultivated Boetica which the natives of the country let lie fallow, claiming that they should not interfere with anything and that it was the duty of their neighbours the Gauls to come to cultivate their lands. The Tyrians had brought with them some men from Palestine who at that time would go to any climate for whatever small sum they could earn. These Palestinians (18) by lending money on security at fifty per cent. had drawn to themselves nearly all the wealth of the country. This made the people of Boetica think the Palestinians were sorcerers, and all those who were accused of magic were burned without mercy by a band of Druids who were called scrutineers or anthropokaustes (19). These priests first of all dressed them up in a domino, took possession of their goods, and devoutly recited the Palestinians' own prayers while cooking them on a slow fire *por l'amor de Dios*.

The Princess of Babylon had set foot to ground in the town that has since been called Seville. Her plan was to embark on the Boetis in order to return via Tyre to Babylon to see Belus her father again, and to forget if she could her faithless lover, or ask for him in marriage. She sent for two Palestinians who did all the business of the court. They were to supply her with three ships. The phoenix arranged everything necessary with them, and after some dispute fixed a price.

The hostess was very pious, and her husband, no less pious, was a familiar, that is to say, a spy of the Druids-Scrutineers-Anthropokaustes. He did not fail to warn them that he had in his house a sorceress and two Pales-

tinians who had made a pact with the devil disguised as a big golden bird. The scrutineers, learning that the lady had a prodigious quantity of diamonds, judged at once she was a sorceress. They awaited nightfall in order to imprison her two hundred horsemen and the unicorns that slept in vast stables ; for the scrutineers are cowards.

After barricading the doors thoroughly, they seized the princess and Irla ; but they could not seize the phoenix which spread its wings and flew away : it had a good idea it would find Amazan on the Gaul-Seville road.

It met him on the frontier of Boetica and told him of the disaster that had befallen the princess. Amazan could not speak, he was too stunned, too furious. He armed himself with a gold-embossed steel breastplate, with a twelve-foot lance, two javelins and a sharp sword called "The Thunderer" that with one blow could split in two trees, rocks and Druids. He covered his handsome head with a golden casque shaded by heron and ostrich plumes. It was Magog's ancient armour given him by his sister Aldée during his journey in Scythia ; the few followers with him were mounted, as he was, on unicorns.

Amazan embraced his dear phoenix, but could say nothing but these sad words—"It is my fault ; if I had not slept with a business-girl in the city of idlers, the lovely Princess of Babylon would not be in this appalling state ; let us run to the anthropokaustes."

He was soon in Seville. Fifteen hundred alguazils guarded the enclosure where the two hundred Gangarides and their unicorns were shut up without having anything to eat. All was ready for the sacrifice that was going to be made of the Princess of Babylon, Irla her chambermaid, and the two rich Palestinians.

The grand-anthropokaustos, surrounded by his little anthropokaustes, was already on his sacred judgment-seat. A crowd of Seville people with threaded berries at their belts put their two hands together in silence, and

the lovely princess, Irla and the two Palestinians were brought up, their hands bound behind their backs, and dressed in dominoes.

The phoenix entered by a skylight in the prison where the Gangarides were already starting to break open the doors. The unconquerable Amazan shattered them from the outside. They came out armed, each mounted on his unicorn. Amazan put himself at their head. He had no difficulty in routing alguazils, familiars, priest-anthropokaustes ; each unicorn stabbed dozens at a time. Amazan's Thunderer cut in two all he met. The people in black mantles and dirty ruffs took to flight, still holding in their hands their threaded berries blessed *por l'amor de Dios.*

Amazan seized the chief scrutineer, pulled him out of his judgment-seat and thrust him on the funeral pyre that had been prepared forty paces away ; on it he thrust also the other little scrutineers one after the other. Then he threw himself at Formosante's feet.

" You are lovable," she said, " and I should just adore you if you had not been unfaithful with a business-girl."

While Amazan was making his peace with the princess, while the Gangarides were piling the bodies of all the little scrutineers on the flames which rose to the clouds, Amazan saw in the distance what looked like an army coming towards him. An aged monarch, his crown on his head, advanced in a chariot drawn by eight mules harnessed with cords, followed by a hundred other chariots. They were accompanied by grave personages in black cloak and ruff, mounted on very fine horses. A crowd of people followed on foot, their greasy hair uncovered, in silence.

Amazan first gathered his Gangarides round him and advanced with his lance at rest. As soon as the king saw him he took off his crown, descended from his chariot, kissed Amazan's stirrup and said to him :—

" Man sent by God, you are the avenger of mankind,



One after the Other

the liberator of my country, my protector. These sacred monsters of which you have purged the earth were my masters in the name of the old man of the seven mountains. I was forced to endure their criminal power. My people would have abandoned me if I had even so much as wished to moderate their loathsome atrocities. To-day I breathe, I reign, and I owe it to you."

He then respectfully kissed Formosante's hand and begged her to enter his eight-mule coach with Amazan, Irla and the phoenix. The two Palestinians, court bankers, still on their faces in fear and gratitude, got up, and the troop of unicorns followed the King of Boetica to his palace.

As the dignity of the king of a grave people demanded that his mules should walk at funeral pace, Amazan and Formosante had time to tell him all their adventures. He chatted also with the phoenix, which he admired and kissed a hundred times. He understood how many Occidental nations, who ate animals and no longer comprehended their language, were ignorant, brutal and barbarous; that the Gangarides alone had preserved the primitive dignity and nature of man; but he agreed especially that the most barbarous of mortals were these scrutineers—of whom Amazan had just purged the world. He did not stop praising and thanking him. Lovely Formosante was already forgetting the adventure of the business-girl, and her soul was brimming over with the courage of the hero who had saved her life. Amazan, informed of the innocence of the kiss given to the King of Egypt, and of the resurrection of the phoenix, sipped the purest joy, and was stirred with the most violent love.

They dined at the palace, and badly enough. The Boetican cooks were the worst in Europe: Amazan advised sending for Gauls. During the meal the king's musicians played that celebrated air that in the course of centuries has been called "Spanish Madness." After dinner they talked business.

The king asked handsome Amazan, lovely Formosante and the beautiful phoenix what they intended to do in the future. "As far as I am concerned," said Amazan, "I intend to return to Babylon, to which I am heir-apparent, and ask my uncle Belus for incomparable Formosante my first cousin; unless she would prefer to come to live with me among the Gangarides."

"My plan," said the princess, "is certainly never to be separated from my first cousin, but I think he will agree I should return to my father, all the more that I was only given permission to go on a pilgrimage to Bassora, and that I have been all over the world."

"As for me," said the phoenix, "I shall go wherever these affectionate and generous lovers go."

"You are right," said the King of Boetica, "but your return to Babylon is not so easy as you think. I have news of that country every day from Tyrian ships and from my Palestinian bankers who are in communication with all the peoples of the world. The whole of the country between the Euphrates and the Nile is in arms. The King of Scythia is demanding his wife's inheritance at the head of three hundred thousand warriors all mounted. The King of Egypt and the King of the Indies are ravaging the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates also, each at the head of three hundred thousand men, to revenge themselves because they were laughed at. While the King of Egypt is away from his country, the King of Ethiopia is ravaging Egypt with three hundred thousand men, and the King of Babylon has only six hundred foot soldiers with which to defend himself.

"I confess to you," continued the king, "that when I hear speak of these prodigious armies that the East belches forth, of their splendour; when I compare them with our little corps of twenty to thirty thousand men who are so difficult to feed and clothe, I am tempted to think that the East was made long before the West. We

seem to have come out of chaos the day before yesterday, and out of barbarism yesterday."

"Sire," answered Amazan, "the last comers often overtake those who entered the race first. In my country we think that man came originally from the Indies ; but I have no definite knowledge on the point."

"And what is your opinion ?" said the King of Boetica to the phoenix.

"Sire," answered the phoenix, "I am not old enough to have an opinion about antiquity. I have not lived more than about twenty-seven thousand years. But my father who was five times as old told me that he had heard from his father that Oriental countries had always been better populated and richer than the others. He had it from his ancestors that the generations of all animals had started on the banks of the Ganges. For my part I am not conceited enough to hold this opinion ; I cannot believe that the foxes of Albion, the marmots of the Alps and the wolves of Gaul come from my country ; and I do not believe either that the firs and oaks of your countries are descended from the palms and cocos-palms of the Indies."

"But where do we come from, then ?" continued the king.

"I know nothing about it," answered the phoenix : "all I want to know is where the lovely Princess of Babylon and my dear friend Amazan can go."

"I very much doubt," returned the king, "whether with his two hundred unicorns he will be in a position to drive through so many armies of three hundred thousand men each."

"Why not ?" asked Amazan.

The King of Boetica felt the sublimity of that "why not ?" but he was of opinion that the sublime was not sufficient against countless armies. "I advise you," he said, "to find the King of Ethiopia. I am in touch with this prince through the medium of my Palestinians ; I

will give you letters to him : seeing that he is the King of Egypt's enemy he will be only too glad to reinforce himself with your alliance. I can help you with two thousand very sober, very brave men ; all you have to do is to engage that number from among the people who dwell, or rather jump, at the foot of the Pyrenees and who are called Vasques or Vascons. Send one of your warriors on a unicorn with some diamonds ; there is not a Vascon who will not leave his castle, his father's cottage that is to say, in order to serve you. They are indefatigable, courageous and gay ; you will be very satisfied with them. Until they arrive we will fête you and prepare your ships. I cannot be too grateful for the service you have rendered me."

Amazan rejoiced in his good fortune at having found Formosante again, and peacefully enjoyed in her conversation all the delights of appeased love which were nearly worth those of budding love.

A proud and happy troop of Vascons soon arrived dancing to the tambourine ; the other troop of proud and serious Boeticans was ready. The swarthy old king tenderly embraced the lovers ; he had their ship loaded with arms, beds, games of chess, black coats, Spanish ruffs, onions, sheep, chickens, flour and a vast quantity of garlic, while he wished them a good crossing, constant love and victories.

The fleet came alongside the shore where it is said that so many centuries later Dido the Phœnician, sister of one Pygmalion, wife of one Sichæus, having left this town of Tyre, came to found the superb town of Carthage by cutting an ox hide into thongs, according to the evidence of the gravest authors of antiquity, who have never recounted fables, and according to the professors who have written for little boys ; although after all there was never anyone in Tyre who was called Pygmalion, or Dido, or Sichæus, which are entirely Greek names, and although finally there was no king of Tyre at all in those times.

Superb Carthage was not yet a seaport ; there were there only a few Numidians who dried their fish in the sun.

The travellers coasted along Byzasceum and the Syrtes, fertile shores where later were Cyrene and the great Chersonnesus. They reached at last the first mouth of the sacred river Nile. It was at the extremity of that fertile land that the port of Canopus was already receiving the vessels of all the trading nations, without anyone knowing if the god Canopus had founded the port or if the inhabitants had founded the god, or if the star Canopus had given its name to the town, or if the town had given its name to the star. All one knew was that the town and the star were very old, and that is all one can know of the origin of things, whatever their nature may be.

There it was that the King of Ethiopia, having ravaged all Egypt, saw invincible Amazan and adorable Formosante disembark. He took the one for the god of battles, and the other for the goddess of beauty. Amazan presented the King of Boetica's letter of recommendation. The King of Ethiopia first of all gave some wonderful fêtes, following the indispensable custom of heroic times. He then spoke of going to exterminate the three hundred thousand men of the King of Egypt, the three hundred thousand of the Emperor of the Indies and the three hundred thousand of the great Khan of the Scythians, who were besieging the immense, haughty, pleasure-loving city of Babylon.

Amazan's two thousand Boeticans told him they did not know what to do with the King of Ethiopia as regarded relieving Babylon ; that it was sufficient that their king had ordered them to go to deliver it, and that they could manage the job alone.

The Vascons said that they had delivered many other cities, that they would beat the Egyptians, the Indians and the Scythians alone, and that they would not march with the Boeticans unless these latter would be the rear-guard.

The two hundred Gangarides laughed at their allies' pretensions and maintained that with only a hundred unicorns they would put all the kings in the world to flight. Lovely Formosante pacified them with discreet and charming words. Amazan introduced his Gangarides, his unicorns, his Boeticans, his Vascons and his beautiful bird to the black monarch.

Everything was soon ready for the march via Memphis, Heliopolis, Arsinœ, Petra, Artemite, Sora, Apameia, to attack the three kings and to wage that memorable war, compared with which all other wars that men have since waged have been cat-and-dog fights.

Everyone knows how the King of Ethiopia fell in love with beautiful Formosante and how he surprised her in bed when a sweet sleep was closing her long lashes. It will be remembered that Amazan, witness of this sight, thought he saw day and night sleeping together. It is a matter of common knowledge that Amazan, exasperated at the affront, suddenly drew his thunderer, that he cut off the insolent negro's depraved head, and that he drove all the Ethiopians out of Egypt. Are not these marvels written in the book of the chronicles of Egypt? Fame has published with her hundred mouths the victories he won over the three kings with his Boetican warriors, his Vascons and his unicorns. He returned lovely Formosante to her father; he freed all his mistress's suite whom the King of Egypt had reduced to slavery. The grand Khan of the Scythians declared himself his vassal, and the marriage with Princess Aldée was sanctioned. Invincible and generous Amazan, recognised as heir to the throne of Babylon, made a triumphal entry into the city with the phœnix in the presence of a hundred subject kings. The festival at his marriage surpassed in every way that which Belus had given. The bull Apis was served up at table roasted. The King of Egypt and the King of the Indies handed the drinking-cup to the

husband and wife, and the nuptials were celebrated by five hundred Babylonian poets.

O Muses, whom one invokes always at the beginning of a work, it is only at the end I call upon you. It is in vain that I am reproached with saying grace without a *benedicite*. Muses! you will not be my guardians any the less. Stop rash sequel-mongers from spoiling with their fables the truths I have taught mortals in this faithful history, as they have falsified "Candide" (20), "The Simple Soul," and the chaste adventures of chaste Jeanne which an ex-Capuchin has disfigured with verses worthy of a Capuchin, in Batavian editions. May they not commit this crime against my printer, who is burdened with a numerous family and who barely possesses the wherewithal to buy type, paper and ink.

O Muses! impose silence on the detestable Cogé, professor of verbosity in the Mazarin College, who has not been satisfied with the moral speeches of Belisarius and the Emperor Justinian, and who has written villainous defamatory libels against these two great men.

Put a muzzle on that pedant Larcher who without knowing one word of ancient Babylonian, without having travelled as I have on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, has had the impudence to maintain that lovely Formosante, daughter of the greatest king in the world, Princess Aldée and all the women of that respectable court, go to sleep with all the ostlers of Asia for money in the great temple of Babylon, for religious reasons. This college libertine, your enemy and the enemy of modesty, accuses the lovely Egyptian women of Mendez of never loving anything but goats, secretly suggesting by this example that he is going to make a tour in Egypt so that he may at last have some pleasant adventures.

As he knows no more about modern times than ancient, he insinuates, in the hope of making some old lady's intimate acquaintance, that the incomparable Ninon slept at the age of eighty with Father Gédoïn of the French

Academy and the Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. He has never heard speak of Father Châteauneuf, whom he takes for Father Gédoin. He knows no more about Ninon than he does about the girls of Babylon.

Muses, daughters of Heaven, Larcher your enemy goes further, he indulges in eulogies of pederasty ; he dares say that all the little boys of my country are subject to this infamy. He thinks he is saving himself by increasing the number of the guilty.

Noble and chaste Muses who have an equal hatred of pedantry and pederasty, protect me against master Larcher !

And you, master Aliboron, called Fréron, former self-styled Jesuit, you whose Parnassus is sometimes in the Bicêtre and sometimes in the corner tavern ; you who have received such justice in all the theatres of Europe in that honest comedy "The Scotch Girl" ; you worthy son of priest Desfontaines, who were born of his love affairs with one of those pretty boys (21), who carry a rod and a fillet like the son of Venus, and who like him take flight into the air, although they never go as high as the chimney-pots ; my dear Aliboron, for whom I have always had so much affection, and who made me laugh for a month on end at the time of "The Scotch Girl," to you I recommend my Princess of Babylon. Say good or bad of it, so that people may read it.

I shall not forget you here, clerical pamphleteer, illustrious Jansenist orator, father of the Church founded by Abbé Bécherand and by Abraham Chaumeix ; do not fail to say in your pages, as pious as they are eloquent and sensible, that the Princess of Babylon was a heretic, deist and atheist. Above all try to engage Mister Riballier (22) to have the Princess of Babylon condemned by the Sorbonne. You will give great pleasure to my bookseller, to whom I have given this little story for his New Year gift

NOTES

NOTES

THE notes in this volume are amalgamated from notes taken from the following sources:—1—Voltaire's own notes; 2—Extracts from Voltaire's correspondence; 3—Notes in the Kehl Edition; 4—Notes in A. A. Renouard's Edition, 1819; 5—Some by the present translators; and 6—Louis Moland's edition of Voltaire's works (Paris, 1877-1885), Vol. 21, published by Messrs. Garnier Frères, through whose courtesy these notes are here used.

NOTES ON ZADIG

1. Cahdi-lesker is the lord chief justice among the Turks, and refers here to the keeper of the seals, in this case probably d'Aguesseau (1668-1751), who refused his certificate for the publication of Voltaire's translation of Newton's "Elements."
2. The Sultana Sheraa is Madame de Pompadour.
3. Mme de P. sang, acted and did engravings.
4. There was at this time a Babylonian named Arnoult who, according to the newspapers, cured and prevented attacks of apoplexy by means of a little bag suspended from the patient's neck.
5. Reference to the work of Réaumur.
6. Anagram of Boyer, a Theatine monk, confessor of pious titled women, a bishop through their intrigues, later the dauphin's tutor, and finally minister of ecclesiastical patronage on the advice of Cardinal de Fleury, who, like all mediocrities, liked giving places to men incapable of filling them, but incapable also of being dangerous. This Boyer was a fanatic who persecuted Voltaire on more than one occasion.
7. Abridgment of the Zend, sacred book of the Brahmins.
8. Chinese words signifying, *li*—the light of nature, reason; and *tsien*—the sky, also God.
9. "The beautiful woman with the big eyes."

NOTES ON THE WHITE BULL

1. Cherubim. Cherub, in Chaldee or Syriac, signifies "bull."
- [2. The truly wise. Christian believers. *Tr.*]
3. The Brahmins were indeed the first to conceive the idea of a revolt in heaven, and this fable served long after as ground for the history of wars between giants and gods, etc.
- [4. Northern poets. Milton. *Tr.*]
5. Achab. III [I] Kings xxii.
6. . . . changed into a bull. All ancient writers employed the terms "bull" and "ox" (*bœuf et taureau*) indifferently.
7. . . . as eye-witnesses attest. Voltaire refers us to Tertullian.
8. Daniel v.
9. III [I] Kings xvii.
10. Xissutre. Berosius, the Chaldean writer, relates indeed that the same adventure befell Xissutre, King of Thrace, but it was even more marvellous. His ark was five stadia in length and two wide, etc. Great dispute has arisen as to which was the more ancient.
11. Ezekiel iv. [The Authorised Version does not support this reading.
Tr.]
- [12. Linro. Rollin. *Tr.*]

NOTES ON THE SIMPLE SOUL

1. Rum.
2. Carriage from Paris to Versailles, resembling a small covered tumbril.
3. Port-Royal was originally a Cistercian convent, and eventually devoted exclusively to the use of a lay community. This community quickly became very celebrated and soon numbered among its inmates some of the most distinguished scholars of the age, who as eminent patrons of Jansenius's great work, the "Augustinus," established schools in opposition to Jesuit teaching. Port-Royal was, therefore, the stronghold of Jansenism. Arnauld and Nicole were two of the most celebrated members of the community.
4. "The English Drops" were a chemical remedy in vogue at the end of the 17th century. They were the invention of one Goddard, a doctor during the reign of Charles II.
5. Friend of Jansenius and one of the founders of Port-Royal.
6. Fezensac. Fesensaguet, Astarac—in ancient times little countries in France—Fezensac was 7 leagues long by 5 wide, and Astarac about 13 by 11.
7. Ignoramuses. Used by Rabelais in "Pantagruel" in reference to members of the "chambre des comptes."
8. Word invented by Voltaire to describe the Doctors of Theology of the Sorbonne, signifying wearers of long linen robes.

9. Another Rabelaisian word signifying "priest."

10. Fable by La Fontaine. Book IX, No. II.

11. Mme. Jeanne Marie De La Motte Guyon (1648-1717) thought herself called to spread the doctrine of a love of God freed from all terrestrial bonds. She claimed that, having reached a state of perfection, souls closely united to God became indifferent to their own salvation. She was imprisoned by Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, but was freed eight months later. At her own request, Louis XIV had her doctrines examined by various ecclesiastics of whom Bossuet was one. Mme. Guyon's doctrines are known under the name of Quietism.

12. Voltaire describes the "Christian Pedagogue" as "an excellent book for fools." The authors were the Rev. Father Outreman and the Rev. Coulon.

13. By the Jesuit, Ribadeneira.

In 1689, the date of the story, William III was proclaimed King of England, and war between France and England started.

Father Quesnel was the Jansenist author of "Moral Reflexions," the hundred and one propositions of which were condemned by the papal bull "Unigenitus."

NOTES ON THE PRINCESS OF BABYLON

1. Parasang is equal to 3 leagues.

2. See Genesis ch. ix. v. 10, and Ecclesiastes ch. iii. vv. 18-19.

3. La Fontaine, Book IV, Fable I, line 18.

4. Perigordian dish.

5. The Cimmerians are the Russians.

6. The town is Moscow.

7. The Empress is Catherine II, 1762-1796.

8. The "one man" is Peter the Great.

9. Scandinavia means Sweden.

10. Later Gustave III.

11. Christian VII of Denmark.

12. Sarmatia means Poland. The philosopher is Stanislaus I. Leszinski.

13. By De Mouhy.

14. By Crébillon the younger.

15. By Hamilton.

16. *Urbi et orbi*.

17. The name of Paris was Lutetia, from *lutum*, mud.

18. Jewish natives of Palestine or Judea.

19. Burners of men.

20. The sequel to "Candide" was by Thorel de Campigneulles.

21. Desfontaines was sent to the Bicêtre for sodomy with a young chimney-sweep. He owed his release to Voltaire, and showed his gratitude by libelling his benefactor. Fréron was another of Voltaire's libellers. Voltaire put him on the stage in his "Scotch Girl."

22. Riballier was a Doctor and Syndic of the Sorbonne at the time that institution censured Marmontel's "Belisarius."

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